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*The Key of the
Blue Closet*

W. Robertson Nicoll

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THE KEY OF THE BLUE CLOSET



THE KEY
OF
THE BLUE CLOSET

William BY
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The Key of the Blue Closet

CHAPTER I

ONE LIGHTS A CANDLE CALLED PATIENCE

“WHAT does one end by doing when all the best is taken away from one, when life has grown trivial, stunted, and narrow; when the sun of one’s happiness is set?” This is the question put by Lucas Malet’s heroine in the *Wages of Sin* to her uncle, and he answers: “After a time, Polly, not at once—that would be asking too much of poor human nature—but after a time, my dear, one lights a candle called Patience, and guides one’s footsteps by that.” She asks whether he speaks of his own experience, and he tells her the story of a courtship which had gone forward and ended over thirty years before. “To the best of my ability I lighted that candle the day your mother told me which of the two brothers who loved her she loved best. It burnt very badly at first, Polly, did my candle—guttered, had thieves in the wick; and meanwhile I stumbled pretty freely. But, by God’s grace, it has burnt brighter as time has gone by—burns brightly enough now, as

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I humbly trust, to light me down the long hill of old age without any very discreditable tumbles." He drew a little faded miniature from its hiding-place. "There is my romance," he said. "This is like her; but you are more like. And so you are very dear to me for sake's sake, as well as for your own. Try to light your candle of Patience, my Polly, in faith; remembering that you are not alone. More than half the noblest men and women you meet carry such candles likewise."

The ordinary troubles and worries of life are not in question, but to most of us, sooner or later, there comes a heavy blow. We realise at once that this stroke is other than the rest, that we are not going to get over it easily, that we may never get over it at all. It may be the appearance of some incurable disease. We have been uneasy for a long time, and have said little. One day we muster strength to go to a great specialist and come out trying to smile with white lips. Or it may be, as in Lucas Malet's story, that we fail conclusively in love, fail to attain our heart's desire, knowing all the while with a sure knowledge that there is no reparation, that the heart will ache with longing to the end. Or perhaps in the business of our life we may meet with some overthrow so great, so conclusive, that there is no chance of setting right what has gone wrong. Or perhaps it may suddenly become clear to us that we are prisoners for life. The circumstances in which we are set have been very uncongenial, but we have always

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fancied either that we could open the door when we pleased, or at least that some day the door would be opened for us, and we should enter on happier, more hopeful years. I know men who have been doing their life-work with hardly one ray of encouragement. They have done their best; but things have been against them. They have been working, let us say, in a dying town, from which there has been a constant exodus of the more hopeful and progressive elements. Increase in any form cheers the heart. Decrease, when it is continuous, dulls it in an extraordinary way. Well, they have believed up to a certain point that they could go like the rest, and one day they find out that nobody wants them, that there is no other place for them, that there they must remain to the end, that their lips can never be touched with the potent wine of triumphant joy. Or perhaps some sudden bereavement makes all things different, and covers the land with mist.

What is to be done in these circumstances? Surely the best thing to do is to light a candle called Patience. How can we light that candle, and keep it burning all the way to the end?

In the first place, we must be very quiet. "Patience," says Bunyan, "was very quiet." It will not serve us to indulge in idle rage or yeasty fury. It will not serve us to be fretful, querulous, feeble. Raving and grumbling are alike absolutely forbidden. Better face the fact that we have to suffer solely, to suffer long, perhaps to suffer for

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all the rest of life. This is so, and nothing can change it. We shall make it worse if we kick against the pricks. We must first of all be quiet.

Then we must try to keep alive some spark of hope. The first thing I should say to anyone in the dust of a sudden blow is, Hope on. This is not a religious letter, and so I do not propose to speak of the consolations of Christianity. I am content to say that we should resolve to wait and see what time will do for us. Of course in a certain sense time does nothing at all. It is what takes place in time that helps us, that soothes the pain, that heals the wound. Time is full of surprises, and some of them are joyful. A merciful mist hangs over the future. But no future is wholly darkened. All the time the healing forces of nature and of society are at work upon us. If we will not fall into utter despair we shall find, after, it may be, many days and months, that it is not with us as it once was. A man may go on for years slowly counting the hours, longing that they might pass quickly and bring with them their balm.

I have known men who in their misery have looked daily at the calendar, and counted the leaden weeks, saying in their hearts, "When I have lived through such and such a period I shall begin to be better." Sometimes the relief is delayed till the heart fairly sinks; but if the candle called Patience is kept burning, the day will come, not perhaps of full cure, but of alleviation. On some morning we

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shall find that the pain is less sharp. It has not gone, but it does not burn and sting as it used to do. There will be a revival, however faint, of interest in passing things. There may even be for once, and that is most hopeful, the forgetting of some dreadful anniversary. Yes, it may be true for the worst sufferers that the joys of their life are yet to come. However slow recovery may be, let it once begin, and it will go on. It will begin, I think, when the time passes a little more quickly, when one ceases to say each morning, "How am I to get through this long day?" The sorrow may remain. It may be impossible to forget it, but sometimes it may be put far from us, and oftener it may be contemplated through the softening medium of thoughts that blend sorrow with hope. Many a bitter memory is recalled at last without its bitterness. To believe this is to light a candle called Patience, for there is no true patience which does not involve an element of hope.

Once more, it is necessary to do something. To do nothing is to throw up the arms and yield. The heart turns upon itself in morbid contemplation, eats itself away. It is best to go on with our regular work as soon as possible, as steadfastly as may be, even when it is mere weariness and burden, without interest of any kind. By and by it will be wise to ask, "Is it possible to change my circumstances?" If that question has to be answered, as so often it has to be answered, in the negative, then one must ask, "How can I conquer my circumstances?" It

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is the clear duty of one in adverse circumstances to escape from them if he can, or at least to recast or renovate them, to mould them so far as they can be moulded. Thus the invalid should accept the verdict of no doctor, but do his utmost to recover health. The man who has met with a terrible reverse in his work or business ought not to give up until he is quite certain that the reverse is irretrievable. I am convinced that multitudes have yielded too soon. In the lives of great men we may read that the tide often turned just when they were on the point of despair. I call to mind Carlyle, Napoleon, Cromwell, and many others. In the same way, the surroundings which are hostile to the life and peace of the spirit may be escaped from, and if the door can be forced open they ought to be escaped from. We are all of us, when the candle called Patience goes out, apt to give over hoping, and to think effort is of no use. It is not true that steady and well-directed labour will achieve anything, but it is true that wise and sustained effort may work wonders.

Still, it has to be admitted that for some things there is no remedy but patience. There are diseases that will only tighten their grasp till life yields. Many of us have to accept pain as our lifelong companion; many of us have to be content with poverty. Many of us have to live in a moral and spiritual atmosphere which is as a bitter east wind. The sun never shines upon our appointed place, never will shine. What then? We must call forth the

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resources of our spirits. We must respond in the right way to circumstance, that the soul may develop virtue and forbearance. It may develop much more than that, even a far-reaching human sympathy and helpfulness. Two of the most beautiful lives I have ever witnessed, lives which turned houses into homes, were lives of bitter and almost unremitting physical pain. Often when the fight with circumstance is bravely continued, the enemy suddenly yields, and gladness of the heart comes out of discouragement and deprivation. There is a story by the German novelist Raabe called *Abu Telfan*. Abu Telfan is a negro village, where a German wanderer is kept in slavery for ten years. He worked endlessly in insufferable heat, he suffered incessantly from the whip. At the end of ten years he was bought out of captivity by a German dealer in beasts for menageries, and sent home. In the utter misery of his toil, misery where the whole nature seemed to be thwarted and crushed and dwarfed, his soul gathered strength and colour. It touched the reality of things; by endurance there came a certain manliness and wisdom. His misery brought him such a sense of the truth of things that he was not deceived. He mastered the essential principle of all stoicism, which is that the externals are nothing, and that the inner self is all. There is no plight in which the human spirit can find itself where it may not obtain some mastery of circumstance. This can be achieved by hope and by steady labour. Whenever effort is

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abandoned there are the sad refuges of drink and drugs and suicide.

So I say that to light a candle called Patience we must first of all be quiet, and then we must cherish some hope, and then we must go on with our work, either for the change of circumstance or for the overcoming of circumstance.

We have great resources. There is a power of endurance in human nature which we know only when it is tested. I have read that nature has given us much more than the capacity for ordinary hearing. I have been told that you may lose half your power of hearing, and be practically unconscious of your loss. There was so much to spare. It is when you have lost a little more than half your power of hearing that you begin to be aware of your deficiency. Whether that be so or not, no man knows what he can bear till he is called upon to bear the worst. We were born to suffer as well as to work, and the better we work the better we shall suffer.

This candle called Patience will often go out; but it may be re-lighted, and at last it will shine very cheerily. Will the old happiness come back? You may as well ask whether the exuberant delight of childhood, and the boundless hope of youth will come back. They will not return. But something may come in their room which is just as good. A man need not mourn overmuch; but he will never be the same again. Many faults of the old days may well disappear, many new virtues take their room. Will the

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wounds ever be quite healed? They may be healed, but the scar will remain; and the sword-like pain when we least expect it will again traverse the heart. I have not touched upon religion; but what if this life is our Exile and Captivity, and Death our Return?

CHAPTER II

“NEVER WEAR A BROWN HAT IN FRIESLAND”

AN Englishman who travelled in North Holland some fifty years ago brought back from his wanderings this valuable precept, “Never wear a brown hat in Friesland.”

He had taken for his journey a brown felt hat, a hat that had every possible recommendation but one. It was a hat with no headaches in it. It might be bumped, it might be packed, you might sit on it, you might sleep in it, and it was still the same, kindly, comforting, unobtrusive. It was a hat indeed that a man might be buried in. And yet it was not a hat to be worn with impunity in Friesland, for there the natives had strange tastes in headgear. Women wore on their heads a knitted cap, a gilt metal cap, a lace cap, and a straw bonnet surmounting all. The men were scarcely less wonderful to behold, and they were not only proud of their ways, but intolerant of the ways of others. Wherever this traveller went a jeering mob surrounded him. He was laughed at with a most disconcerting and noisy sincerity. It was with great relief that he escaped with his brown hat from Friesland into England.

There is an obvious moral in the precept, “Never

“NEVER WEAR A BROWN HAT”

wear a brown hat in Friesland.” It enforces the great value of tact to all who desire to get peaceably, usefully, and happily through the world. Those who are without tact think that all nations can be dealt with in the same way, and all individuals. The tactful man is the man who knows better. John Bull is honestly puzzled to understand the intense hostility with which he is regarded in most countries. He means well, and knows that he means well. The fact is that John Bull has persisted, through all his career, in wearing a brown hat in Friesland. The luxury has cost him many millions—I dare not say how many.

But I propose to deal with tact in the treatment of individuals. We begin by saying that tact means touch. It is, as a lexicographer says, fineness of discernment as to action and conduct, especially a fine sense of how to avoid giving offence, an ability to say and do what is best for the intended end. Two things are necessary for tact—a kind heart and common sense. Perhaps I should say that for the very finest tact we need both qualities in the superlative degree. We need love, and we need the highest form of intellectual discernment. We need deliverance from the prison-house of self. For the truest tact there must be the widening and falling away of the personal horizon, so that the interests of others replace one’s own.

“And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.”

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It is love that brings human beings into spiritual alliance, and yet love by itself is not sufficient. Mark Rutherford describes a common tragedy in his unerring way: "His wife was an honest, good little woman, but so much attached to him and so dependent on him that she was his mere echo. She had no opinions which were not his, and whenever he said anything which went beyond the ordinary affairs of the house she listened with curious effort, and generally responded by a weakened repetition of M'Kay's own observations. He perpetually, therefore, had before him an enfeebled reflection of himself, and this irritated him, notwithstanding his love for her; for who could help loving a woman who, without the least hesitation, would have opened her veins at his command, and have given up every drop of blood in her body for him? Over and over again I have heard him offer some criticism on a person or event, and the customary chime of approval would ensue, provoking him to such a degree that he would instantly contradict himself with much bitterness, leaving poor Mrs. M'Kay in much perplexity. Such a shot as this generally reduced her to timid silence." Lord Chesterfield was wont to say that those who really desired to please were almost sure to please, but there is much virtue in the "almost." When we say that a man is "well-meaning" we usually mean that he is tactless.

For tact, we need the power of cool reflection, the memory of individual traits, precision of judgment, and practical skill. The tactful man is the man who

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does not desire to show his own cleverness, who does not delight in his own finesse. There should be no trace of vanity in him, and he ought to be sympathetic where sympathy is even tolerated. Have you ever seen the searching looks of a great physician? He fixes his eyes of calm sympathy and regard on his patient; he listens with that look of helpful attention which is peculiar to the faces of those who have known what suffering is. He will let his eyelids fall and lift them again as he probes once more for the secret which he must read for himself. Before the interview is over, he has found it. There is no tact like the tact needed in dealing with great sufferers. Those who are most skilful in that divine art become by long practice able to read clearly the wants and the weaknesses, and know how to lay their fingers healingly on the sore places. Often, however, in this world we have to study dangerous creatures, and master their natural history. The late Lord Amphill was considered by good judges one of our very best diplomatists. He was the greatest possible contrast to his relative, Lord John Russell, one of the least tactful of human beings. It is told of Lord Amphill that during his mission to Rome he possessed a great boa constrictor, the habits of which he delighted to study. The creature once escaped when he supposed it to be asleep, wound itself round him, and began gradually to tighten its coils. Lord Amphill saved himself by remembering that there was a bone in its throat which he could find and break. He very coolly

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discovered it, and got rid of his dangerous pet. In the same way he studied natures more or less unintelligible to him, not to compliment himself on his own acuteness, but to fit himself for his duties. He was perfectly simple; he avoided the snare of being too wily, too strategic, but he could see and hear and think, and he watched others with patient, speculative eyes that asked their question again and again, rejecting imperfect answers, till the true answer came. This, it seems to me, was a magnificent example of tact, and it had its triumph, though Amphyll was never widely known. Vanity, which is one of the great solvents of reticence, was not his. He had the desire for knowledge without the desire to communicate it. He used it as the opportunity presented itself, not to magnify himself, but to guide him in wise action.

This was the tact of a diplomatist, but in every sphere of life, in the home, and in the office, and in society tact is priceless. In some ways perhaps there is an improvement in our manners. You do not meet many of the disagreeable people described in the essays of our ancestors. Your acquaintances do not begin sentences with, "What a fool you were to——" They do not say, "This will blow over, as other follies of yours have blown over." They do not single you out of a company where you are sitting dull and dispirited, and ask why you look so wretched. It seldom happens that even the silliest people tell at table a succession of stories about Mr. Somebody,

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when Mr. Somebody's daughter is opposite. One lady does not say to another in company, "Pardon me, your false hair is coming down." Nor do we brutally remind the old of their frailty. "You must be very tired; you have been ageing very much of late." Neither are brusqueness and repartee much in fashion. I was told by an old friend of Douglas Jerrold that a sensitive man, on being introduced to him, said, "Now, Mr. Jerrold, you must not make a butt of me." "Then why do you bring your hog's head here?" was the immediate reply. Nowadays if any one made such an answer he would be promptly and deservedly kicked. We have found out the sham of the rough diamond and the rough husk business, and it is highly discredited. As has been said, by the time one has broken one's teeth on a rough husk the tenderness of the kernel has become illusory or valueless. Archbishop Temple was, it may be hoped, the last of the brusque. Nevertheless, tact means much more than the abstinence from brutality. People still say things that they would rather not have said. "I like your book," said a lady to a popular novelist, "and Mr. ——— likes it." "I am glad *he* likes it," was the reply. And still there are people who delight in explanations. There are some things, I am convinced, which are better left unexplained. I do not wish that everything should be made clear to me. I hope many sleeping dogs will be allowed to lie.

The true tact means insight and kindness. Those who have to direct others, employers and teachers,

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for example, know very well that to get the best from those under them they must carefully study individual characteristics. There are many who never do their best work unless a strong hand is upon them. They have to be taught obedience to rule. When they learn that they are happy and go well. Others, again, answer best to appeals to their reason. If they understand why they should take a certain way, they will take it, but they are never happy in the dark. Others again—and these are the finest natures—will do anything and everything for love.

One of the best examples of the lower form of tact was that of Sidney Godolphin, who plays so large a part in Macaulay's *History*. I know that historians do not judge his character very favourably, though there is some difference of opinion. But he held his position as few have held it through the stormiest times, and he received from Charles II. a very fine compliment. That monarch praised him as a man who was "never in the way and never out of the way." I venture to think that Sir Leslie Stephen undervalues this commendation. Those who are never in the way and never out of the way are not easily found, and they are not easily parted with. Sidney Godolphin was born in 1645. He entered Parliament in 1668, and he left office finally in 1710, dying in 1712. When his relations to James, to Mary of Modena, to William, to Marlborough and his Duchess, and to Queen Anne, are considered, we may be sure that Godolphin, whatever his weaknesses, was a

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man of the most exquisite tact. He must have been something more than a diplomatist. He must have made himself agreeable and necessary to men and women of the most varied types. But the true tact, I repeat, is the tact of love, the tact of those men and women who are always doing some good, relieving the burdened, and holding up the stumblers. The lives of their fellows are surer in their brightness and braver in their shadows because such hearts have touched them.

CHAPTER III

THE KEY OF THE BLUE CLOSET

IN the *Mill on the Floss*, Mrs. Pullet gloomily reflects as to the incapacity of her husband to unravel the mystery of her keys in case of her decease.

“‘ I don’t know what you mean to do, sister Glegg, but I mean to give him (Tom) a tablecloth of all my three biggest sizes but one, besides sheets. I don’t say what more I shall do; but *that* I shall do, and if I should die to-morrow, Mr. Pullet, you’ll bear it in mind—though you’ll be blundering with the keys, and never remember as that on the third shelf of the left-hand wardrobe, behind the nightcaps with the broad ties—not the narrow frilled uns—is the key o’ the drawer in the Blue Room, where the key o’ the Blue Closet is. You’ll make a mistake, and I shall never be worthy to know it. You’ve a memory for my pills and draughts wonderful, I’ll always say that of you; but you’re lost among the keys.’ This gloomy prospect of the confusion that would ensue on her decease was very affecting to Mrs. Pullet.”

Why do we miss so much those who have gone beyond our reach in this world? Is it not because they have taken with them a key? It may be the key to vast and glorious and richly stored halls and

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chambers full of music and beauty and inspiration. Or it may be the key to a little bare room—no more than a closet—but the warmth of love was in it, and it was good to be there. The doors remain, and we are always coming up against them, always wishing to pass through them. But these doors are fast. When Coleridge died, Charles Lamb could not get the thought of him out of his mind. He never fairly recovered. His mind ran on the theme till he joined his friend, with a constant turning and reference. “He interrupted himself and his friends, almost every incident, with some play of affected wonder or astonishment or humorous melancholy on the words *Coleridge is dead*. Nothing could divert him from that, for the thought of it never left him.” He said himself: “His great and dear spirit haunts me . . . he was my fifty years’ old friend without a dissension. Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. I seem to love the house he died at more passionately than when he lived. I love the faithful Gilmans more than while they exercised their virtues towards him living. What was his mansion is consecrated to me a chapel.” When Byron died Alfred Tennyson, who was a boy of fourteen, carved on a rock the words, “Byron is dead.” It was, he said afterwards, “a day when the whole world seemed to be darkened for me.” When Dryden died, as Macaulay says, his secret was buried in his grave. Many felt the same thing about Tennyson, especially when they read the last lines beginning—

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“When the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
Brings the Dreams about my bed.”

They are as simple as simple can be, and yet no one before Tennyson could ever have written them. Nor is it likely that any one capable of the same achievement will ever be born again. There were many, both of those who loved Mr. Gladstone and those who did not, who felt with a thrill of conviction when they heard of his passing, that for good or for evil, such an assemblage of qualities would never be incarnated in a human form again.

These are instances which every one can readily add to from his own experiences. What we are more apt to forget unless bereavement touches us very closely, is that the small in this world are as unique as the great. Nothing is more untrue than the saying that most people are as much alike as coins of the realm, and might almost have been struck out like coins from the same die. It seems so when we pass a judgment on those of whom we know little or nothing. Those whom we really know, with whom we have entered into intimacies of relation, assure us of their uniqueness. The mould was broken after the first impression had been cast. Perhaps it is the uniqueness of single qualities, more than the uniqueness of their combination, that attracts human beings one to the other. When the end comes there is in a little circle of humble people the same feeling as is stirred in a wider world when a great man falls like a tower. A door is closed, the key is gone with the vanished

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hand. This may mean comparatively little. There was one with whom at intervals of years we held such talk as we never had with any other. There was one theme on which *we* could speak, and no two besides. But though it was pleasant to enter this blue closet and feel that we could enter it when we pleased, the experience did not count for very much in the complexity of life, and we have forgotten it now. It may mean ever so much, and yet life may be possible and even sweet in spite of the loss. Other keys may be found opening to other chambers.

Mr. Henry James speaks with his usual suggestiveness about Robert Browning, and the amazing contrast between the comparatively idyllic Italian time spent with his wife, and the rich and ample period, full of felicities and prosperities, which followed it. It was not that the passion and the romance of that wonderful love had vanished. One might think so, sometimes, in seeing the later Browning in London society, genial, accomplished, and to all seeming perfectly content. Mr. James says: "The poet and the member of society were, in a word, dissociated in him as they can rarely elsewhere have been; so that, for the observer impressed with this oddity, the image I began by using quite of necessity completed itself: the wall that built out the idyll (as we call it for convenience), of which memory and imagination were virtually composed for him, stood there behind him solidly enough, but subject to his privilege of living almost equally on both sides of it.

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It contained an invisible door through which, working the lock at will, he could softly pass, and of which he kept the golden key, carrying the same about with him even in the pocket of his dinner waistcoat, yet even in his most splendid expansions showing it, happy man, to none. Such, at least, was the appearance he could repeatedly conjure up to a deep and mystified admirer." This may not be the exact truth, but it shows a subtle insight. There are, again, instances where the departing take all the keys with them, and the survivor dies indeed. In the lower planes of life this is true. Most unions, whether for business or for love, leave the two who unite quite distinct. They are influenced one by the other, but the individuality is retained. There are cases, however, where to combine is to form a new substance. Many years ago a great and apparently prosperous business was built up in London. The head seemed to be carrying everything before him in his own line. After a certain point there were cracks here and there in the great structure, and in the end there came total collapse. One man closely conversant with the facts told me that the tide turned when the confidential clerk of the head partner died. His master was accustomed to consult him about everything, and he knew how to advise. I think it is much more likely that the head and the clerk were what they were only because of their union, and that if either had been taken the failure would have come just as it did. There have been journals which have

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gone on very prosperously for a time. Two men have been credited with the success. One of these men leaves, and the particular flavour of the paper is gone, and its prosperity steadily declines. People say, interpreting roughly, that the man who remains was very much overrated, and that the brains and the ideas were with the other. But if the other had remained and his friend had gone, he would have taken the life out of the journal in the same way. Neither could do much standing alone, but when they came together there was that in their union which achieved triumph. Happy marriages are very common, but the perfect marriage of union is very rare. A recent writer has quoted from Gogol's *Dead Souls* the story of a married couple with an unpronounceable name. They were neither young nor specially moral. "They were ordinary sinners, inefficient, careless, selfish, slothful. Their house was badly managed, even dirty, and they were not too rich, and they had been married many years. Both were rather despicable, but they had a way of breaking off suddenly in the midst of their occupations and diversions and exchanging a long, long kiss. They did not know why they did this; something mysterious urged them to do it, and they called each other by pet names, and in short," says Gogol, "they were what is called happy." To such people nothing matters so long as they are together, neither misfortunes nor faults. They realise permanently the sufficiency of one soul to another, but to them sever-

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ance means the collapse and death of the one who goes second.

When John Keble's wife at Bournemouth heard of her husband's death, she asked them to keep his grave open till she should be ready to join him, and I think she only lived a week. The author of *Sandford and Merton* strangely accomplished a perfect marriage. Thomas Day was peculiar to the last degree, and his notions about matrimony were such that he could hardly expect to find the helpmeet he desired. He specified as his requirements a combination of the spirit of a Roman matron with the simplicity and physical health of a Highland mountaineer, and the culture of a London blue-stocking. He demanded in addition that the lady should be tall, strong, and healthy, and should possess white and large arms. He further insisted that his wife should join him in retiring into the country, in abandoning luxuries, pleasures, and society, and dividing everything beyond what was necessary for the ordinary comforts of life to the poor. Strange to say, he found a lady to agree to these terms, and stranger still, Mrs. Day remained a devoted wife to the day of her husband's death, and when he died was inconsolable for his loss. Though a bad horseman Day insisted on riding an unbroken colt. The colt shied during the journey, and Day was thrown on his head, receiving such injuries that he died within an hour. His wife never afterward saw the sun. "She lay in bed, into the curtain of which no light was admitted during the

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day; and only rose to stray alone through her garden when night gave her sorrows congenial gloom. She survived her adored husband only two years, and then died broken-hearted for his loss." In one of Dr. Weir Mitchell's stories, that novelist, who is even more famous as a physician than as a novelist, describes with wonderful suggestiveness a union of this kind. When it ends, all things came to an end for this world.

I shall not attempt to point the moral other than very briefly. There is a key left to most of us that takes us into the chamber of memory, and that key should be oftener used.

"Thou a postern-door canst ope
To humble chambers of the self-same palace,
Where Memory lodges and her sister Hope."

As for the great dead, they have left us the treasure of their works and lives, and we are poor indeed unless we enter into the heritage of the past. Mr. Newbolt's noble lines may be quoted:—

"Drake he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Swung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Yarnder lumes the Island, yarnder lie the ships,
Wi' sailor lads a-dancin' heel-an'-toe,
An' the shore-lights flashin' an' the night-tide dashin',
He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago."

"Drake, he was a Devon man, an' rüled the Devon seas,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe."

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'Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low:
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them
long ago.'

"Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the drum,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin'
They shall find him ware an' wakin' as they found him
long ago!"

To those who have lived much in the life of the
affections there comes a time when the memory of loss
is little more than a promise of more perfect gain.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOODMAN'S CROFT

THAT excellent chronicler, Robert Chambers, tells us that about two hundred and fifty years ago there still lingered in Scotland some traces of an ancient and curious superstition. It was a practice to keep a certain field out of those constituting a farm, consecrated to "the Goodman," by whom was designated the potentate of the lower regions. This field was called the Goodman's Croft—a term evidently used to soothe and propitiate an evil and formidable power which men felt it was difficult to combat. The Goodman's Croft might be the best piece of land in the district, but it remained untilled and unreaped. It was in eternal fallow, and covered thick with weeds, a blot and a nuisance among the useful fields around it. Synods fulminated against it; clergymen used particular persuasives to get the practice abolished, but the Goodman's Croft was nevertheless maintained in many places till the time of the Civil War.

The superstition has a real vindication in human nature, and illustrations of its existence lie close to hand, and are of daily experience. Thus in its most

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terrific form it shows itself as a double life. The Bishop of London has declared that he knew men who made a great profession and were assiduous supporters of the Church, who had a secret evil life which they managed to screen from the world. Nobody can live long in London and know much of what is passing without being painfully aware of this. I could mention two or three men whose names would be recognised by every reader, who turned out when they died to have followed courses of action which for their wickedness and for their daring seemed simply incredible. These men were famous in Church and in State; they were respected and beloved in their own legitimate households; but the breath was hardly out of their bodies when it became known that they had been wearing a mask. I will not dwell on this painful fact.

Let us turn to others more familiar and more endurable. How often does it happen that a man who is shrewd and judicious in his own pursuit strains away towards another in which he is practically insane. There is no particular harm when a man who is an expert in business sets up privately as a poet. He can perhaps afford the time to write and the money to publish his verses. One of the very ablest and most distinguished business men I have ever known imagined that he had a great turn for theological and Biblical criticism, and continued to the end of his life sending me articles on subjects of which he did not understand the very alphabet.

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Often the Goodman's Croft is more costly. A man is engaged in a good sound business, which will flourish if he attends to it. He is not satisfied, however, and starts a business of another kind with the result that he loses the old and fails in the new. The tendency to speculation on the part of men otherwise prudent is a familiar fact. It is said that this tendency to establish a Goodman's Croft is particularly strong in men of the artistic temperament. A great novelist fancies that he has a turn for writing verse, and goes on writing them till his reputation disappears. The legitimate task has little of the finer force of his mind, and he does not care for its success. A clever lawyer will take it into his head that his business is to refute Darwin, and the result may be foreseen.

However, I propose to give the matter another turn. It goes without saying, that we have all our faults and limitations. There is an uncultivated field in every one's mind, but this does not become a Goodman's Croft until we boast of it. When we do that we hand it over to the devil and help him to extend it, for the area of life that is deliberately surrendered to evil tends to widen and widen. Our limitations may never be got rid of. We may be compelled to acquiesce in them resignedly, and to confess them humbly. Against our faults we must wage a constant fight, though in this life we can never completely triumph over them. But to boast of the waste space, to abandon it over to nettles, hen-

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bane, and deadly nightshade, is a form of devil worship.

How often do we hear people actually boasting of their temper! "As you know me I am very quiet, but wait till my temper is roused, and you will see the roof blown off." "My temper was up, and I gave it him hot." It is certain that temperless people are of small use in the world, but temper needs to be kept under perfect control. It is right sometimes to be stern, to speak resolutely and decisively, to rebuke folly, and carelessness, and wickedness. But even then there should be a measure. If there is no measure the result is devastation. People who habitually lose their tempers on small provocation may be feared in their households and offices. There are advantages, as has been said, in being a cantankerous fool.

But such people are never loved. They never get the best service of any one. The indulgence of temper is responsible perhaps for more heart-wreck and home-wreck than almost anything else in the world. This is a Croft that most surely tends to enlarge. The end of the man of temper is generally a very lonely, loveless, and remorseful death.

Closely akin to this is the practice of rudeness, the use of strong language on all occasion. That admirable observer Dickens has given us many examples. There was Cholloy.

"Our fellow-countryman is a model of a man, quite fresh from Nature's mould," said Pogram, with enthusiasm. "He

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is a true-born child of this free hemisphere—verdant as the mountains of our country; bright and flowing as our mineral Licks; unspiled by withering conventionalities as air our broad and boundless Perearers! Rough he may be; so air our Barrs. Wild he may be; so air our Buffaloes. But he is a child of Natur', and a child of Freedom; and his boastful answer to the Despot and the Tyrant is, that his bright home is in the Settin' Sun."

J. B. in *Dombey and Son* is another.

"But when my friend Dombey, sir," added the major, "talks to you of Major Bagstock, I must crave leave to set him and you right. He means plain Joe, sir—Joey B.—Josh Bagstock—Joseph—rough and tumble. Old J., sir. At your service."

Mr. Carker's excessively friendly inclinations towards the major, and Mr. Carker's admiration of his roughness, toughness, and plainness, gleamed out of every tooth in Mr. Carker's head.

People of this type are perhaps not quite so numerous as they once were, but there are too many. "I never speak sponges," "I always say what I think," "I am a blunt, plain fellow"—this kind of thing almost invariably means that the speaker is a rude, unfeeling, overbearing boor. He has escaped in some way the ordinary discipline, and has actually become proud of his own insolence. There are few traits more objectionable. In our complex modern life tact and courtesy have become supreme virtues. They alleviate the troubles of existence to an incredible extent. They further the true ends of life more than can easily be believed. As for strong language, there

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is a place for it, but for rude language, for idle, disproportionate vehemence, for furious epithets used at random, there is no place at all. If there has to be a choice between the two it is infinitely better to be dull than to be exaggerated. A scrupulous sense of justice and the faintest touch of kindness would make much that passes for plain speaking quite impossible. I cannot help thinking, however, that on this side there is an improvement. The slasher used to occupy quite a recognised place in journalism, but he has fallen on evil days.

Another way of assigning a Croft to the Goodman is to excuse the neglect of one department of duty by attention to another. There is no function in life that has not various sides. In whatever occupation you are your work is more or less diversified. It is impossible to be equally successful in all the departments of one's work, but an honest effort should be made.

Reading over the chronicles of the South African war, one can see that the source of most failures was here. One General, for example, had courage, but he had no tactics. Another was an excellent disciplinarian, but he did not attend to scouting. Another managed to feed his men, but he could not lead them. I once heard a minister say: "I detest visiting, and do not attempt it; the pulpit is my throne." He was in no way distinguished as a preacher. Very probably he was better adapted for preaching than for visiting, but it was his business

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to do the best he could in both departments. He was a lost man when he actually bragged of his deficiency. He had assigned his Croft. That accomplished scholar, the late Roundell Palmer, was plucked at the University in his entrance examination. He had not paid attention to mathematics, and was floored by a proposition in Euclid. Characteristically he resolved to go in for honours in mathematics, and his brilliant University career prepared the way for his forensic triumphs.

I have never heard in my life any one boast of being a miser, and perhaps there are not many misers in these days, though meanness is still quite common. But men will boast about being good-hearted, free with their money, extravagant. They will tell you that they never could save.—“I could never be bothered with accounts.” They do not know what their income is or what their expenditure is. Such people are often very popular for their day; they are lavish in their hospitality, and they get the credit of being kind-hearted, though I doubt whether they are. How many men who are throwing away money which does not belong to them in the fashionable restaurants of London do anything for the poor? When they become bankrupt, those who suffer are hard-working, honest tradesmen, who as a rule earn their money with difficulty. It is they who pay for these banquets. One of the cruellest things in the world is to see industrious, conscientious, faithful workers ruined by these scoundrels who have passed for good-

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hearted, and who have boasted of their inability to add up figures.

There are many who are heavily handicapped all their days by physical weakness or by positive ill-health, and they need to have a care in this connection. "When I last saw you," said Emerson in his inclusive way to a man, "you were bragging of your ill-health." There are many who do the like. Dickens has given us the classical example in Mrs. Witterly, who had an air of sweet insipidity, and a face of engaging paleness. There was a faded look about her, and about the furniture, and about the house. "Your soul is much too large for your body," said Mr. Witterly. "Your intellect wears you out; all the medical men say so—you know that there is not a physician who is not proud of being called in to you. What is their unanimous declaration? 'My dear doctor,' said I to Sir Tumley Sniffim in this very room, the very last time he came—'My dear doctor, what is my wife's complaint? Tell me all, I can bear it. Is it nerves?' 'My dear fellow,' he said, 'be proud of that woman—make much of her; she is an ornament to the fashionable world and to you. Her complaint is soul. It swells, expands, dilates—the blood fires, the pulse quickens, the excitement increases—whew!'" Mrs. Witterly proved to Kate Nickleby a very vulgar tyrant. The less sickly people say about their health the better. Hazlitt, who was not a cruel man by nature, said he detested sick people so much that he wished he could kill them.

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I have no doubt that he was referring to those who bragged about their sickness. It is almost worse to make ill-health an excuse for neglected duty. A man should undertake no more than he can do. Bad health is a capital excuse for a dispensation from laborious pleasures. The invalid must stay at home and learn if possible to enjoy the quietude. It is also an excellent reason for declining outside engagements. But when it is flaunted in one's face as a reason for this transgression and that, it becomes so odious that one enters into a deep fellowship with Hazlitt. Chronic ill-health is undoubtedly the Goodman's Croft of many people. It is excuse for every kind of lapse, and a more irritating excuse it would be very hard to find.

"I never read anything," said a clergyman the other day; "I have no time for books." Said another man: "I could never read Scott, I was never able to get beyond the first chapter of any of his books." Well, I can conceive these statements being made humbly, honestly, and inoffensively. It is quite true that there are worthy people who can see nothing in Scott. They are much to be pitied, and they ought to pity themselves, as their failure to appreciate Scott means a strange mental incapacity. They would act wisely in saying little about it. There are very good excuses at certain periods of life for not reading books. I have just been reading Madame Roland's letters to her husband, written in the first months of her marriage from Amiens. She was in

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the full tide of a young wife's happiness, and the epistles are delightful, full of details about her housekeeping and her marketing. She was quite unable to conceive how her husband could care for such things as politics and the American war! When one thinks of the part she played in the succeeding years all this reads very strangely. But it records what was perhaps the most delightful and joyous period of her tragical, passionate history.

But what would Madame Roland have been if she had never read at all? What is the use of any preacher who never reads? He may go on for a time on the stores he has accumulated or with a fresh experience, but in the end he must store his mind or starve. What companionship or comradeship could there be in the woman who never opens a book? There is another familiar phrase: "I am not a scholar, but——" This usually means that some grossly illiterate person is dogmatically settling a question which can be judged only by the educated.

The last example I shall give is very familiar. Who has not heard the expression, "I do not pretend to be a saint"? It is usually an ominous phrase. If a man pretends to be a saint he is as a rule an odious hypocrite. To profess the lack of sainthood and to deplore it may be legitimate enough, but to say in a boast, "I do not pretend to be a saint," generally means that a man is allowing himself liberty to do

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wrong, and that is to hand over the Croft to the Goodman.

To sum up, if you watch for the characteristic you must often claim for yourself, you will generally discover your chief point of danger.

CHAPTER V

DR. ROBERT A. NEIL

I HAVE seldom had a greater shock than I experienced on opening the *Times* of Thursday, June 20th, 1901. It contained the announcement of the unexpected and almost sudden death of Dr. Robert A. Neil, Fellow and Senior Tutor of Pembroke College, Cambridge. Dr. Neil was the most intimate friend and companion of my college days. If ever a man seemed to be marked out for a long life it was he. I do not remember his ever having a day's illness, but he caught a chill, peritonitis supervened, and in a very short time his useful and honoured life was prematurely ended. So we are from time to time made to realise that the ground beneath us which seems so solid and substantial is as unstable as any gossamer.

Dr. Neil was unique in his way, even from the first. His father, the Rev. Robert Neil, parish minister of Glengairn, near Ballater, and my father were at college and long after like very brothers, and there is still in existence much of their voluminous correspondence. They differed vehemently on the question which divided the Scottish Church at the Disruption; but though their intimacy ended, their friendship was maintained to the last, and so when I met young Robert Neil at the Grammar School of

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Aberdeen, we were prepared to associate, and we did so with a vengeance. He and I were, if I am not mistaken, the two youngest students in the class when he entered the University. He had not completed his fourteenth year; at any rate, if he had, he had only just completed it. He came to the Grammar School six months before, after being trained by his father at home. He was not at that time strong in Greek, nor particularly strong in Latin. We were beside each other on the Bursary list, he one step higher than I; but no sooner had he entered the Greek class, under Professor Geddes, than his extraordinary and special gift manifested itself. His verbal memory was like nothing I have ever seen in this world. He was a born linguist. He would take Liddell and Scott's dictionary, and with his feet on the fender read over a page, and then hand over the book to me. I would find that he could give practically the English word for every Greek word just by means of the one reading. The teaching of Geddes, who was a scholar of the old type with the scholar's passion, particularly stimulated him, and from his first hour in the class he was deeply interested. The deficiencies of his previous teaching counted for nothing with a man so gifted. I doubt whether his rapid and wonderful progress was known to the class generally, but every one knew it at the end of the session. Never shall I forget seeing him called up to receive the first prize in the Greek class. He looked such a child, with the shy, wistful, inno-

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cent look of the child, when he went up amid the enthusiastic cheers of his fellow-students to receive it, and I need not say that it was presented very graciously. From that time onward his position was secured, though one very able student, happily still with us, disputed it even in classics. Wherever the gift of a verbal memory came in he was supreme. In the Natural History class he took nearly the highest place; not that he was particularly interested in Natural History, but because the long classifications which others toiled and sweated over fixed themselves in his mind at once. He was able to write them out on paper after giving them the attention of five minutes.

I know that many people have a poor opinion of the linguistic faculty. Charles Lever, in that repertory of wit and wisdom which he wrote under the signature of Cornelius O'Dowd, speaks with withering contempt of the linguist, and of the man who can play games. He asks whether a great linguist has ever shown any powers of mind, whether an expert in chess has made his mark in anything else, and reserves his sharpest stings for the man who is an accomplished pianist. He makes a reservation in favour of the skilful whist player. No doubt Lever had a good deal to say for his case, but Neil was a great linguist, and something more. From the very first his mind worked incessantly on the questions of the day. He was brought up in the atmosphere of Conservatism, and he was always a Conservative in

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politics. Being on the other side I had many boyish debates with him. He was discouraged by the tendencies of the time, but comforted himself in the prospect of a Conservative reaction. This he never ceased to predict most confidently, and in his later years he saw a more triumphant fulfilment of his dreams than he could ever have anticipated. Though very ardent in the advocacy of his own convictions, he was good-tempered in argument. There was a touch of fire in him as boy and man; he was of the true Scottish breed, earnest, persevering, very self-reliant, warm-hearted to his friends, with just a leaf of the thistle in his bonnet.

Notwithstanding his great devotion to his studies, he was keenly interested in literature and journalism, and was a constant frequenter of the news-room. He used to say that he would not mind where his lot in life was cast if there was a good news-room within twenty minutes' walk of him. But his great characteristic was his unceasing flow of humour. He was a true humourist, able to put everything in a quaint light. As a correspondent I do not think I ever knew his equal. For years after we separated, each to take up his own work in life, we corresponded continually, and I possess somewhere many of his letters. I shall be thought guilty of extravagance when I say that these letters reminded me more of Charles Lamb's letters than any others I have seen either in manuscript or in print.

When he triumphantly took his degree at Aber-

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deen University, he was for some time undecided about his future. He thought of being a doctor, and attended medical classes for a certain period. There, too, his memory and general keenness came in, and he was a prize-winner in chemistry at least, if not in other subjects. The excellent professor of chemistry at that time had a rather quaint way of speaking. He was wont to pause frequently with the view of giving intensity to his observations. When he gave Neil the prize, he remarked, "And I must say—Mr. Neil—that you RICHLY DESERVE IT." Neil was also occupied in the University Library, but I do not think he was ever quite happy or settled in the study of medicine. We met very often, and both of us took part in the University Literary Society. He found his true place in life when he finally decided on going up to Cambridge.

It was recognised in Cambridge from the beginning that a scholar of no ordinary type had come upon the scene. After many preliminary successes he came out as Second Classic and Craven Scholar. He used to say himself—I do not know with what truth, for he was the most modest of men—that there were many to surpass him in Greek composition, but that he could hold his own in translation. However that may be, he obtained such honours as were within the reach of a Cambridge Don. He became Fellow and Tutor of Pembroke College, and the beautiful rooms which in the minds of many will be permanently associated with his name were just over the

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archway. There he settled down and remained to the end of his life. The rooms were exquisitely furnished and enriched with the spoils of his travel, with Persian rugs and carpets of high value, and with many precious and richly bound books. The space he had for books was limited, and the result was that his store was more and more carefully sifted each year. I found among them up to the last visit I paid him the volume I gave him at our parting in Aberdeen. It was a copy of Andrew Lang's *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France*, the best book, in my humble judgment, Mr. Lang has ever written. He presented me with a copy of *Poems and Romances*, by George Augustus Simcox, always valued by me, and now more valued than ever. Others who know can speak, and have spoken, of the great position which Neil took in the University of Cambridge, a position which grew more and more with every passing year. He was one of those men who are born for influence and do not need to seek it. Loyal to the heart's core, he threw himself with ardour into all the concerns of the University, and his own special work was done as well as he knew how to do it. He followed with eagerness the progress of classical research on the Continent and in America, and never allowed himself to fall behind. His pupils had the benefit of his unsparing devotion, and of his kind consideration, for he was essentially kind and courteous. He disliked everything in the nature of acrimony, never, so far as I know, allowed himself to be-

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come angry in controversy, and carefully respected the feelings of the humblest. He was a staunch friend, and had among his intimates some of the best men in Cambridge. In particular, he entered into the closest relations with Robertson Smith when that distinguished scholar went to Cambridge, and frequently travelled with him in Europe and the East. There is no harm now in saying that the article on Robertson Smith which appeared at the time of his death in the *Bookman* was written by Neil. It was a careful summary of the main facts in Robertson Smith's career, and Neil characteristically dwelt on the fact that Robertson Smith was essentially moderate in his views. They came together in politics at the time of the Home Rule split, when Robertson Smith, who had been an ardent Liberal, separated himself from the main body of his party. He also mentioned in that article the interesting fact that Robertson Smith thought there was more religion in England than in Scotland.

This leads me to say that Neil's powers did not appear at their best in writing, I mean, in writing for publication. No one could dash off a more scintillating letter, but when he took his pen in hand to address the public he became constrained and stiff. This he knew well, and editors found him most difficult to persuade. In early years he occasionally helped me with reviews in the *Aberdeen Journal*, and he contributed now and then to the *Cambridge Review*, though the only article I can call to mind was one on

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Omar Khàyyàm. He was a subject on which Neil was eminently qualified to write, for he had made himself a great Sanskrit scholar, and was closely associated with E. B. Cowell, the real instigator of Fitz-Gerald's translation. But somehow the paper missed fire. One felt that the writer could have said a great deal, but something hindered him. But if he did not write himself he was very helpful to others who did, was ready to read proofs and make valuable suggestions. This, of course, was mainly in editions of the classics, but there was one exception at least. He was very proud of Thomas Gray's connection with Pembroke College, and assisted Mr. Gosse in his valuable labours on that poet. The books he published in his lifetime are both in the department of Sanskrit, and offer nothing except to specialists. But for many years of his life he was engaged on an edition of Aristophanes. He did not live to publish it. He was very fastidious; he would wait for the next German edition; and so the work was postponed and postponed. A man who was at once so diligent in his own business and so responsive to social claims had little time to spare. Since his death his work has appeared, and has been warmly received both at home and abroad.

Dr. Neil continued his interest in literature at least for many years after he left Aberdeen, and at one time was a member of the Savile Club. I think, however, that for the last few years he was more at home with his Cambridge friends than with London literary

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men. He studied Robert Louis Stevenson with something of the care and thoroughness which he would give to a classic. In connection with this, one interesting incident comes back to my memory. One of Stevenson's books, written in collaboration with Lloyd Osbourne, had just been published. I was in Cambridge, and Neil spoke to me about the novel, and said that he was confident he could point out Stevenson's part in the book. Shortly after he came to see me, and I arranged that he should meet the man who had the handling of the story, and knew exactly the manner in which it had been composed. They compared notes, and it turned out that Neil was wrong in nearly every point. He was very much impressed by this, and referred to it again and again. Though he condemned strongly the action of the Free Church in removing Robertson Smith from his Chair, he was not certain that the results of criticism would stand. In connection with this he would talk of the history of the Homeric controversy, and read out impressions of certainty as to the analysis of the poems which subsequent research had not sustained. Once on a visit to Oxford, he heard two famous Broad Churchmen preach. One of them was Jowett. Neil's comment was that the sermon recognised no higher power in the universe than the Master of Balliol. The other, who is still living, preached on the Higher Criticism. "How thankful we should be," said he, "that when we get rid of the myth of the Resurrection and the legends of miracle, we are

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able to grasp more firmly than ever the great central verities of religion." Neil was in his nature averse to violence and dogmatism, and ready to give a respectful hearing to the other side. Yet when his mind was made up, I don't believe that he changed it.

Above all, he was full of old loyalties and pieties. What he brought with him from the Glengairn manse, that he kept to the end. He had a passionate love for the Aberdeenshire hills and heather, and spent part, and often a good part, of every year among them. He has been laid to rest in the churchyard at Glengairn, not so very far away from the burying-place of his friend Robertson Smith, who, though in many respects different, was yet like him in that outstanding characteristic of loyalty to the early friends and days. Neil built himself a pretty house in Ballater, some five miles from Glengairn, which his mother and his sisters occupied till his mother's death. Of his devoted affection for his kindred I need not speak. The Conservatism which he learned at Glengairn he maintained through evil report and good, though I am told that in University politics he was Liberal. Long ago, the first time I visited him at Cambridge, he struck me very much by his gloomy view of the prospects of this country under a Liberal Government. He said that with him it was not so much a question of Liberalism and Conservatism, but a question of Empire or no Empire. He dreaded and disliked the Liberals because he thought that they

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had lost the spirit of the Elizabethan days, and cared nothing whether the Colonies should be kept or not. He was afraid that if Radical views prevailed this country would become another Holland, richer, of course, and more largely populated, but still comparatively insignificant in its influence on the world. He anticipated with great dread the accession of Mr. Chamberlain to supreme power, for he regarded Mr. Chamberlain as an enemy to the Empire. This was, I am ashamed to say, the first time I had ever seriously thought of Imperialism, and it is strange to remember what he said in the light of what has passed since. In religion he used to glory in being called a Moderate. I do not know what he would have said in these last years, but I think it would have been the same. His was essentially the view of the old Moderates of Scotland, the view too, of Shakespeare and Scott. In its baser forms it is contemptible enough, but in its highest manifestations it has a great deal to say for it, and those who have seen cause deliberately to reject it in every form must acknowledge that it has done justice to elements in Christianity dangerously ignored by the majority of the older evangelicals. In short, he was a man who took his own way and chose his own circle, but he was ever accessible and kind to all with whom he came in contact, and I should doubt very much whether he ever made an enemy. The most reckless slanderer would find it hard to say anything in disparagement of Robert Neil. From end to end of his

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life I verily believe he was true to his own convictions and his own ideal. I can think of nothing in his career to be regretted or palliated; every memory is a pleasant memory. The thought of him will always be part of my treasure.

CHAPTER VI

“NEVER CHEW YOUR PILLS”

THIS, I believe, is a proverb of Mr. Spurgeon's, and it was more significant a generation ago than it is now, when chemists have surpassed themselves in making medicines palatable. Still it means a great deal.

It is not directed against rumination. “Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies” is an occupation sometimes only too beguiling. It is a great thing in a world like this to be able to call back through life something of the delight of the supremely delightful moment. Lady Margaret Bellenden, in *Old Mortality*, lived through a strange and shaken time, but the fact that Charles II. once breakfasted at her house was a solace through all and to the end. “I remember his sacred Majesty King Charles, when he took his disjune at Tillietudlem, was particular in inquiring——” When the storm was over, and Edith married Morton, Lady Margaret consoled herself with the recollection that marriage went by destiny, “as was observed to her,” she said, “by his most sacred Majesty Charles II., of happy memory,” when she showed him the portrait of her grandfather, Fergus, third Earl of Torwood, the handsomest man

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of his time, and that of Countess Jane, his second lady, who had a hump back and only one eye. “This was his Majesty’s observation,” she said, “on one remarkable morning when he deigned to take his disjune——” All know how a pleasant phrase in a letter will be lived upon for days. I heard last night of a writer who turns a very bold front to the world, and is generally supposed to be self-sufficient. In a moment of confidence he showed a friend of mine a review which he carried about with him in his pocketbook. “I have my low moments like other people,” said he, “though I do not show them, and when I have this gives me comfort.” Yes, we may recall our pleasures, but we must not analyse them. Mr. W. H. Hudson has pointed out very acutely that Herbert Spencer lost the enjoyment of life through the excessive development of the critical faculty. He could never get into simple, uncritical relation with things. He philosophised over pleasure, and so analysed every emotion that unsophisticated enjoyment of the world was impossible. The world was to him rather a world of abstract principles than of flesh and blood, and the result was that his affections were never called out.

When we are speaking of pills, the reference is to the mortifications, the disappointments, and the irksome tasks of life, and not to its graver and grander sorrows. To be able to make this distinction marks a noble nature; to be able to apply it thoroughly and consistently is the highest reach of wisdom. Charles

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Grandet was not worthy of Eugenie, but the incident that first gave her a deep and serious interest in his destiny was certainly to his credit. He received the news that his father, being unable to meet his engagements, owing four million francs and being able to pay no more than one million, had escaped from his shame by suicide. To Charles Grandet's uncle the really serious misfortune was the bankruptcy, and the subsequent poverty which it entailed upon the youth. Charles, however, was wiser. He had not then been corrupted, and so he took his two misfortunes very differently. He lamented his father with passionate tears, while he bore the ruin with the lightness of youth.

Never chew your pills, that is, the best way to deal with anything disagreeable is to have it ended as soon as may be, and then leave it. The chewing of imaginary pills is the worst error of all, and goes further to weaken and impoverish life than almost any other habit. In St. Teresa's Book of the Foundations, she tells us how she went to found her convent at Salamanca. The first night was spent in a half-ruined house, out of which some students had been turned. The nun who was with the saint was very nervous, and said in the night, "I am thinking, Mother if I should die here, what you would do alone?" It was the night before All Souls', and the bells of the University city were ringing. This sound increased the fear of the nun, but St. Teresa boldly answered, "When this event happens, Sister,

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I will think what I ought to do. For the present, let me sleep.”

Never chew the pill of a disagreeable duty. The tasks that can be accomplished in five minutes are often those from which we shrink in the most reluctant fear. There is a very fateful letter to be written. How is it to be phrased? There is a painful interview to be faced, an interview which will soon be ended, but will in its course touch the sorest places of the heart. Since the thing has to be done, it is the best to get it over. By postponement the imagination magnifies and multiplies the suffering until it becomes intolerable. No rehearsals of the scene make that scene any easier when it comes. The rehearsals simply unnerve the weak heart that has to go through it somehow. So in the choosing and arranging of our daily tasks it is best to get through the hardest first. That accomplished, the others may be enjoyed. So long as the shadow and the poison of the apprehended effort pass into the rest they, too, carry with them the seal of pain.

Never chew the pill of a laborious and uncongenial task. Men who are easy in circumstances are eminently wise in choosing early some great work on which to expend their energies. In the absence of compulsion the task may never be fulfilled, but even so it is pleasant to think about it, and pleasant to talk about it. There are those who win a reputation on the score of a huge addition they were to make some day to the literature of the

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world. George Ticknor was a fortunate American—fortunate in many things—but never more fortunate than in his conception and execution of his history of Spanish literature. That work gave his life agreeableness and dignity. It brought him into the best company of the world; it gave him an unchallenged superiority to all the rest of his countrymen in one important field of knowledge. It is easy to see how it sweetened his whole existence. Even Prescott, in the face of his severe physical disabilities, found endless solace in the preparation of his histories. But when the task is irksome, and when it has to be accomplished in a given time, it is very necessary not to chew it. By this I mean that a man should give the due number of hours to the work each day, and then make the best of what time may remain. He should turn his thoughts and energies into other fields. If he fails to do this, if he eats, drinks, sleeps, talks, and walks his work, that work will not only become intolerable to himself, but will in all probability lack freshness and life, and reflect only too plainly the weariness of its creator. What signs of weariness there are in Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon!* Yet he toiled at it doggedly; he did his best; he turned over conscientiously the volumes of the *Moniteur*, which are the saddest sights in Abbotsford, "the great French guns that laid the prince of Scotsmen low." What a change from the free, unhoused conditions in which he had wrought before! Carlyle made life terrible

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for himself and other people, while he sojourned in the valley of the shadow of Frederick. He insisted on those who lived with him descending its dark defiles, and living there with him. Still Carlyle, though he chewed his pill, did swallow it at last. In one of his lately published epistles he says that the stupider he happened to be, the more necessary he found it to get to work at once. So never chew your pills while work is waiting, lest you end like the twins in the *Golden Butterfly*, who were always putting off trying their work of genius, and ended by doing nothing at all.

Never try to evade the acceptance of painful facts. Once you see them to be facts receive them, and by that I mean act upon them. Recognise that the world is for you what these facts make it. Even so it may be a tolerable world. Yes, even if you have to recognise that certain misfortunes are irremediable—that the chance once lost will never recur, that the disablement, the impoverishment will endure—then do not fight vainly, but see how a reconciliation can be effected which will once more put you in tune with circumstance. After certain incidents it is necessary that life, to be bearable, should be reorganised, lived on another scale and in other circumstances. Many people die in protesting against this, and many who do not die are shipwrecked.

The worst un wisdom is the un wisdom of those who chew their pills to the last without swallowing them.

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Sometimes, and perhaps often, a very little thing will separate and darken two lives; some wretched mortification may be brooded over till it turns a sweet nature into a sour. It becomes incorporate with life, and in sleepless, dark hours every little circumstance is recalled with torturing minuteness. Mortifications are the inevitable experience, and it is to be observed that they never leave a nature where they found it. They exalt it or they lower it. There is a way of training memory so that it shall cast out much at least of what is little and what is unclean. Alas! when we think of all that memory loses, so much of the flower of thought and wit, so many words, sweet, solemn, and nobly ordered that have passed away, while they were still ringing in our ears, and when we think of the poor dregs it holds against our will—we may well bemoan ourselves. But the true tragedy is to allow hard experiences to root themselves in our souls, and put forth evil fruit till a troublous and, in a sense, degraded course is run.

I select two examples, one from biography, and the other from fiction. The posthumous memoirs of Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln, suggested the proposal that a new form of death-duty, on a prohibitive scale, should be applied to check the production of autobiographies. It was, to tell the truth, a thoroughly ill-tempered book, and there is reason to fear that it reflected the writer, and that in spite of his high qualities. He missed, early in life and

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for several years, the Rectorship of Lincoln, a position on which he had set his heart. Though the place came to him ultimately, and with it much honour, the grievance remained, and became bitterer with time. Many years after he described his chief opponent as “my Satan.” The successful candidate was “a ruffian” and “a satyr.” One of the opposition was “a wretched crétin.” The ferocity that marks these epithets gave a morose aspect to his whole view of the universe. It prevented happiness, and to a very great extent it prevented achievement. It had consequences which I must not fully indicate.

Equally true and still more impressive is Balzac’s picture of Monsieur de Mortsauf. M. de Mortsauf was born to be rich and influential, but he was on the Legitimist side, and he never achieved his hopes. Still, he had his compensations. He recovered some of his property, and made a very fortunate marriage. Nothing availed, however, for he never ceased thinking of what might have been. He cherished a gloomy and bitter spirit until he reduced the life of his wife and children to a perpetual exercise of patience. Once he took a walk with a guest on some heights in the neighbourhood of his home, and they arrived on a moor where nothing could grow. The earth was stony, dried up, without any covering of fertile soil; nevertheless there were a few oaks and bushes, but instead of grass there was a carpet of wild mosses on which the feet slipped. M.

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de Mortsauf struck this desolate unproductive earth with his cane, and turning round suddenly said to his guest with horrible emphasis, "*Voilà ma vie!*"

We must swallow our pills and make the best of life, make the best of it even at those periods when things look dark enough. I have a kindness for that Scotsman who, when proposing to maintain in argument the superiority of Scotch over English grapes, began, "I maun premeese that I like grapes sour!"

CHAPTER VII

THE ONE FACT MORE

ONCE upon a time a young man was on a visit to a country house. He had left the University after a distinguished career; but somehow he had failed to find his place in life, and was anxiously looking for a situation. He received a letter from London urging him to come up immediately as a position was vacant, an ideal position which he might probably obtain by personal application. The young man did not go. He wrote that he would come up in two days. It turned out that he was too late, and he lost his chance. Every one wondered at his procrastination, but by and by the mystery was explained. He had fallen in love with a girl, and intended to propose to her on the day when he should have gone to London. So you see the knowledge of one fact more explained everything.

I have long been puzzled at certain episodes in the history of the Lake poets, but two of them have been fully cleared. It is very difficult to understand from the printed materials the estrangement between De Quincey and Wordsworth. De Quincey's chapter on Wordsworth is one of his best pieces, but there is a vein of malice in it which it is hard to comprehend. But when one knows the circumstances of De Quin-

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cey's marriage, and Wordsworth's share in them, he has found the key to that lock. Similarly the relations of Southey and Wordsworth to Coleridge are at certain points perplexing, but there is an explanation most honourable to Southey and Wordsworth. Whether these elucidations will ever be published I do not know. Perhaps it is best to leave the matters in obscurity. But they illustrate my contention that we are often hopelessly lost and misguided in life for want of the one fact more.

I have a friend who is hesitating between two positions that have been offered to him. All who know him agree that in one of these he is likely to succeed, and in the other almost certain to fail. He knows all that we know, but he hesitates. Doubtless there is one fact more known to him, and that one fact makes all the difference. Why do men sometimes refuse to move when everything seems to call them away? Why do they move when everything seems to say that they should remain where they are? Is it mere impulse? In some cases it may be. There was a man in the Bible who would not remain in the place where he seemed to have everything. When he was asked what he lacked, he replied, "Nothing; howbeit let me go in anywise." But for the most part it is not impulse that prompts the flight. It is the one fact more.

This must be the reason why in so many cases advice is useless. The wisest counsellor can only give his opinion on the materials laid before him. A

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single fact might completely change his view, and that fact is hidden from him. Necessarily, then, he goes wrong. A doctor or a lawyer will tell you when you go to them that you must keep back nothing. So it ought to be in all affairs of counsel. Unsolicited advice is generally more wide of the mark even than the advice which is sought for. On two occasions in my life I went against my own judgment in deference to older and wiser men, and in both cases they were wrong. I knew something that they did not know, though I could not very well disclose it. What seems desirable to the majority may not seem desirable to the individual, and if his tastes do not lie in that way, it is no comfort to him that the majority think he has done well, and even covet his place.

I need hardly say that it is the one fact more that makes the difficulty of judgment. There is a French saying, "To know all is to forgive all." Taken as it stands, the aphorism is as false and as mischievous as it can be. It involves a complete denial of moral responsibility. No doubt some sins are not less but more heinous than they seem. If we knew the circumstances in which they were committed, we should condemn the transgressor more gravely than we do. But oftener it is the other way, and when the one fact more leaps to light we almost say to ourselves that to judge any one we ought to know everything.

"What's done we partly may compute,
But know not, what's resisted."

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That is one part of it, but it is by no means the whole. The knowledge of a single fact, a glance of one moment might completely alter our whole conception of a situation.

About three weeks before Emily Brontë's death, and only a short time before Anne Brontë's health finally failed, their sister Charlotte read to them an article on their books from the *North American Review*. "What a bad set the Bells must be," says Charlotte, mocking at their critic. "What appalling books they write? To-day, as Emily appeared a little easier, I thought the *Review* would amuse her, so I read it aloud to her and Anne. As I sat between them at our quiet, but now somewhat melancholy fireside, I studied the two ferocious authors. Ellis, the 'man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal, and morose,' sat leaning back in his easy chair, drawing his impeded breath as he best could, and looking, alas! piteously pale and wasted; it is not his wont to laugh, but he smiled, half amused, and half in scorn, as he listened. Acton was sewing; no emotion ever stirs him to loquacity; so he only smiled too, dropping at the same time a single word of calm amazement to hear his character so darkly portrayed. I wonder what the reviewer would have thought of his own sagacity could he have beheld the pair as I did?" The best of all the Brontë critics, as I venture to think, a writer in the *Christian Remembrancer*, made a noble confession after Charlotte Brontë's death. He had spoken of her in her

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lifetime as “an alien, it might seem, from society, and amenable to none of its laws.” The cruel words drew forth the only reply Charlotte Brontë ever made to a critic. When she was dead and the reviewer read her life, he confessed that he had received a lesson. “Such revelations as this book gives us are a lesson to weigh words. We should never forget that the unknown author has a known side, that he is not an abstraction. . . . We believe that all the critics thought they had a tolerably tough nature to deal with, that there was no need to sugar the bittered draught in this instance, and when a woman assumed a masculine tone, wrote as well as, or better than, any man amongst them, and showed herself afraid of nothing, that gallantry and patronising tenderness which is commonly bestowed upon woman was changed to gall. And now the administrators of the portion have to reflect on the private, most feminine sorrows, of this Amazon; of a patient life of monotonous duty; of the passionate hold the purest domestic affections had on her character; and which amongst them, if he could rewrite his criticism, would not now and then erase an epithet, spare a sarcasm, modify a sweeping condemnation? We own it wounds our tenderest feelings to know her sensitiveness to such attacks; and when she sheds tears over the *Times* critique—of all things in the world to weep over—our heart bleeds indeed.” Are considerations like these to forbid all criticism? No, but they ought

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to forbid cruel personalities. They ought also to make us tolerant of what seems eccentricity, caprice, and error. If we knew the one fact more, we should see that there is very little caprice indeed in this world. People have a reason for what they do, though they may not choose to tell it, and we may never be able to find it out.

Once I discussed with a friend the melancholy of a certain author. My friend argued that the said author had no right to be melancholy. He had passed his years of struggle, and acquired an enviable fame while he was yet young. I knew more about the history of the author than my friend did, and to me there was no perplexity. If a man has fought his way through terrible experiences, and darkened years, success and sunshine will not alter his temperament. He will never get rid of haunting memories and presaging fears, and I apply my doctrine of the one fact more. A great disappointment or a great sorrow may permanently disable the heart. We cannot explain men.

“Why is it you shrink from all life-work—you with such a head

Of hope and will of sweet composed energy, whose shirk
From action never could we see in earlier days long dead?”

The man himself knows, but he will never tell us, and our guesses are almost certainly wide of the mark. I knew a public man, who though he lived many years after the death of a cherished daughter, never really recovered himself. Something had gone

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for ever—lift, buoyancy, inspiration, hope. Max Müller says that till his daughter died he had an endless delight in life, and would fain have gone on working for two hundred years. But when she vanished she took the spring with her. New loves may come, but they do not make the old loves cold, and they do not end the weary, silent sufferings of the soul. On the other hand, there are men whose amazing courage and brightness under the heavy pressure of adverse circumstances is a standing miracle to their friends. Who knows from what secret springs of peace and strength they draw their fortitude?

The doctrine of the one fact more applies to the future, and is a legitimate ground for hope.

I have found that many who have given up their religious belief have surrendered it under the weight of hard and heavy trials. They have ceased to believe in prayer, because prayers which they offered with the whole urgency of their spirits were denied. They had ceased to believe in Divine love because life has not been kind to them. It is of very little use to discuss the evidence of Christianity with such sufferers. You cannot answer an experience. There must be a new experience, or at least another interpretation of the old experience, before faith can be recovered. That experience may be near at hand. One fact more, when we know it, unties the knot. One of our greatest writers was miserably distressed by the death of his son. He could not get over his

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grief. One day his physician said to him boldly, "If you knew what I know, you would be very thankful that he died." "How can that be?" "If he had lived he would certainly have become hopelessly insane, and in a very short time." But that experience, that argument, may come only with the passing of the years. We must travel our weary way to the interpreting fact. Why have I taken this troublesome rough road? Is it never to end? Well, it sometimes happens, even in this world, that there is a sudden turn in the road. Or to change the figure, the road leads us to a goal which makes up for all its hardnesses. The path of dust and dead leaves brings us to the fountain. The slow and painful ascent ends at the summit of the hill, and as we look out on the wide landscape we do not grudge one difficult step. Some may read these lines who keep wondering all the time why they ever took up the work they are doing, why they ever came to live where they are living. If they had chosen another way, the whole world would have been different. Let such take heart. To-morrow they may meet the friend whose friendship will be the best blessing of the years, the friend whom they never could have met on any other path. Some are faithfully drudging in poorly requited toil with hardly a hope beyond it. To-morrow they may discover that keen eyes have been watching them, and silently marking their fidelity and patience. They may be suddenly raised beyond their utmost dreams. It is well to cherish no

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illusions, to go on diligently with the appointed task, making the best of what comes, and with the full resolution not to flinch, though no sudden brightness fall upon the life. But a reasonable hope ought to be cherished. There is no period of life at which we ought to say that there are no more glad surprises for us in the future. Life is hard enough, but not so hard as some would make it, and its rewards come to those who have worked for them more often than many would have us believe. When they come then the one fact more illumines the darkest pass. We say, "Rough and steep though the path may have been, it was the right path, since it led us to this." To the believer the one fact more is—
heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

“ B. A., D. J.”

IN one of the racy prefaces which appear in Crockford's Directory, there was once a story about a gentleman who returned himself as B.A., d.j. of a certain University. On being asked for an explanation, he wrote back that by d.j. he meant *de jure*, by right. “By the letters d.j. I meant that I ought to have the B.A., and should have had it if I had been treated fairly, but I demurred to or at least inquired what the teacher of logic meant by an assertion he made at one of his lectures, namely, that ‘sugar and melting are the same thing.’ Because I did not see the truth of this expression at once, but ventured to ask for an explanation, my degree was refused me.” It is not every one who is so frank as this gentleman or as another who signed himself F.S.I., and when asked of what Society or Institute he was a Fellow, replied, “I am not a Fellow of any Society or Institute; F.S.I. is an honorary degree which I conferred on myself for my own use and benefit.”

I do not propose to touch on the large question whether we get our deserts in life from the Supreme Power, but the relations of human beings are more easily discussed. Do we get what we deserve from

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our fellow-creatures? Very few are so frank as the clergyman who styled himself B.A., d.j., and yet if the deepest thought were spoken, it might be found that many are laureated in the same way. They think they have a right to some title or distinction which has never been conferred upon them. I have been told by those who know about examinations that many candidates are convinced that it is the unfairness of the examiners which prevents them getting through. They are like Mr. Barrie's student who came home without a prize. Gradually it leaked out that the professors had a spite against him. I imagine that whenever the Birthday List of Honours is published or the roll of Honorary Degrees at the Universities, there are many searchings of heart. Also there are those who are unable to console their disappointment at missing a professional prize. It is not unkind nor untrue, for example, to say of the late Sir William Harcourt that he styled himself Prime Minister d.j. Let any reader ask himself candidly where he thinks he ought to stand in the business or profession he pursues. I venture to say that not a few will find themselves linked in sympathy to the candid gentleman pilloried by Crockford.

Nor is it to be denied that the apportionment of honours and preferments is often unjust. Men of real eminence, who have done true service in science or in literature, go undecorated to the grave, while pushers, as A.K.H.B. called them, not infrequently

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get a great deal more than they deserve. It is not wonderful that there is much jealousy in human life. Thus where you meet a company of lawyers you will hear their candid criticisms of the judges. I have even heard popular preachers marked in plain and low figures by their brethren. It has been admitted that among literary men there is something of the same spirit manifested at times. It may be done quite innocently and without serious malice. It is not wonderful if the old are slightly irritated by the sudden promotion of the young. Sir Walter Scott, who had such a keen eye for the facts of human life, frequently refers to this one. Thus in the *Abbot* honest Adam Woodcock slightly resents the advance of Roland, after experiencing the weight of his arm. Roland, however, did not forget to drop a few gold pieces, and to make a signal of kind recollection and enduring friendship as he departed at full gallop to overtake the Queen. "It is not fairy money," said honest Adam, weighing and handling the gold. "And it was Master Roland himself, that is a certain thing—the same open hand, and by Our Lady" (shrugging his shoulders)—"the same ready fist! My Lady will hear of this gladly, for she mourns for him as if he were her son. And to see how gay he is! But these light lads are sure to be uppermost as the froth to be on the top of the quart pot. *Your man of solid parts remains ever a falconer.*" I have put the last sentence in italics, for it is golden. It goes right to the truth of human feeling, and sug-

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gests the consolation wherewith the stolid unsuccessful man tries to make himself comfortable. By the way, the name Adam suggests Adam Bede, who experienced something like Roland when he was told by Captain Donnithorne that he was to dine upstairs with the large tenants. Mr. Casson, the butler who “was not butler for fifteen years without learning the rights and wrongs about dinner,” was naturally offended. He considered Adam “rather lifted up and peppery like”: he thought the gentry made more fuss about this young carpenter than was necessary; they made no fuss about Mr. Casson, although he had been an excellent butler for fifteen years.

It will be remembered that in *Quentin Durward* Le Balafre, his uncle, is hurt by his nephew's happy fortune. Even Crawford is surprised, though pleased. “Thou art a singular youth,” said Crawford, stroking the head of the young Durward, as a grandsire might do that of his descendant; “certes, you have had as meikle good fortune as if you had been born with a lucky hood on your head.” “All this comes of his gaining an archer's place at such early years,” said Le Balafre; “I never was so much talked of, fair nephew, because I was five-and-twenty years old before I was *hors de page*.” “And an ill-looking mountainous monster of a page thou wert, Ludovic,” said the old commander, “with a beard like a baker's shool, and a back like old Wallace Wight.” The triumphs of these heroes had justifi-

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cation, and were modestly borne, but there are triumphs of another kind.

Why do men fail to get their deserts? Partly through causes which are not within their control and partly through their own fault. There is a large element of what we call luck in human life. An important place falls to a man because he is on the spot, because he has been able to do some little service to a powerful personage, because he makes his application at the propitious moment. Proximity is an influential factor in the disposition of affairs. The patron appoints to a vacancy some man whom he personally knows and likes. Even in examinations luck plays its part. When Lord Kelvin was a student at Cambridge he was universally held to be a mathematical genius of the first order. But when the examination for the Tripos came on, it was noticed that another candidate was writing with extraordinary celerity and precision. It turned out that this candidate had a singular power of solving problems quickly and accurately. He cleared paper after paper, and came out Senior Wrangler several hundred marks above his rival if I recollect well. He took an honourable place at the University, and was a man of mark, but for one who recognises the name of Stephen Parkinson there are a thousand who are familiar with that of Lord Kelvin. I do not wonder that some people are superstitious about luck. There are those who have almost every virtue. They are patient, persevering, and constant. Yet somehow

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nothing goes well with them. They fail through the fault of others. I have known such men in business, men who have been afraid because they had gained the reputation of being unlucky; others again prospering everything they touch. Sir Walter Scott said once, very pathetically, that no one flourished under his shadow. There are those whose shadow seems to carry fortune with it. They may not be particularly successful themselves, but every one who is associated with them profits by the association. Such things cannot be explained. I am convinced that about a great many comparative failures in life we can only say that somehow things have always been against them.

While admitting this to the full, I am nevertheless of opinion that in some cases we do get our deserts, and are often treated far better than we deserve, this even though we protest in silence or in speech. Authors are apt to lay the blame of their failure on the blindness and perversity of critics. They are very apt to fancy that there is a conspiracy against them. Sydney Dobell was by no means a vindictive or suspicious man, but he went to his grave believing that *Balder* would yet be reckoned among the great poems of the language, and the serenity with which he held to this fact is affecting. Rossetti fancied that a league of conspirators was busy in destroying his reputation. The late Professor Nichol, of Glasgow, a man of excellent parts, held that the London critics were prejudiced against

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him because he was a Scotsman, and never rendered him even a modicum of justice. But as a matter of fact, each had his just reward; not all the praise nor all the blame was true, but taken together they made the truth. No man was ever written down save by himself, and it is equally true that no man was ever written up save by himself. What is true about authors is true about the rest. But apart from the question of ability there are certain moral causes that frequently account for failure. It has to be remembered that a man's qualities must be taken together. He may have certain qualities of extraordinary worth, but he has others which neutralise them. The sources of failure are, I think, mainly timidity, temper, vanity, indolence, and want of adaptability, and these are so subtly intermingled that it is often difficult to distinguish between them.

Timidity accounts for many failures of worthy people. There comes to a youth his one great chance, and he misses it. He distrusts himself and disobeys the call, thinking it will be repeated when he is better prepared to answer it. That call never comes again. I knew in his old age a preacher who in his youth was famous far beyond the bounds of the little country town where he fulfilled his ministry. He was called to London when in the springtide of his early promise. He decided to wait, and he was left alone working honourably, but becoming by degrees the shadow of his early self. Another I think of was offered at twenty-five an important journal-

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istic appointment in the colonies, but he hesitated to leave home; he thought another chance would arrive, and he remained to the day of his death a humble clerk. Generally speaking, the call to wider work should be bravely answered. Archbishop Tillotson, who seems to have been really unwilling to accept the Archbishopric of Canterbury, wrote: “There may perhaps be as much ambition in declining greatness as in courting it.”

Temper is one of the most potent causes of failure. Temper when controlled is a singular force—no man perhaps ever climbed high without it; uncontrolled it is devastating. The man who in circumstances of provocation can demean himself with calmness and dignity is the man who conquers. To indulge in temper is to inflict on oneself a much graver injury than is inflicted on any enemy. Some men can refrain from furious outbursts, but their temper finds vent in querulousness, which is almost worse. The querulous man is the most intolerable of associates. We see men of very moderate abilities rising to great places in the Church and State. They do not obtain their promotion without a reason. They had no single quality of emphatic distinction, but they had a happy union of serviceable qualities. They could be trusted to do nothing indiscreet and nothing violent. One eminent writer of the Church of England whom I knew destroyed his career by his fretfulness. Intellectually he was far above others who became Bishops, but he was

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repeatedly passed over because men felt that they could not trust his temper and his tact. Of political careers wrecked by temper it might be cruel to give instances.

Vanity, laziness, and want of adaptability go together. We are all lazy by nature. It is only by severe exercise of the will that most of us work at all. We should be less lazy if we were less vain. The indulgent critic writes, "Mr. B. might safely rest his reputation on this poem alone," and Mr. B. believes him and comes to nothing. The vain man says of his work, "It will do," and leaves it, and earns a just condemnation. In spite of all the talk about the strenuous life there are very few people who live it—very few who day by day and year by year go on with resolute hard work. Vanity also often leads men to disdain lowly beginnings, and to eat their hearts out in vain ambition. Want of adaptability may be traced in many cases to vanity, but in many others it means simply a certain stiffness and dimness of vision. There are multitudes who persist in adhering to the old methods which once succeeded, and shut their eyes to the facts that glare around them. They will not see that all things are in process of change, and that those who cannot change with the changed times must perish.

In the end it is wisest for us frankly to accept the judgment of our fellows. Most of us happily do so. We are quite contented and even very thankful. We see that life has been kinder to us than it might

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have been. We may sometimes confer degrees upon ourselves, but we have the sense to do so in the very depth of silence. We do not challenge the verdict of the judges; we are glad in our hearts that it has not been sterner. “I hope you will not allow yourself,” wrote the wise Master of Balliol, “to become the most miserable and contemptible of all characters, a disappointed man.”

CHAPTER IX

CONCERNING EELS

It is an ancient fancy that every type in the lower kingdoms of life is represented in humanity. It may be admitted that eels are not distinguished for backbone, and sometimes we are forced to recognise that this is true of a certain number among men.

It is fair to say that eels have their qualities in spite of this. I do not think many of us would join in the raptures of a French naturalist who speaks of their slender form, "their delicate proportions, their elegant colours, their gracious flexions, their easy gyrations, their rapid springs, their superior swimming, their industry, their instinct, and their sociability." But they were admired in old times. The Egyptians paid the eel so great a compliment as to enrol it among their gods, and the Greeks invoked the eel as the goddess of pleasure. Even so amongst human beings who have no backbone, there are many amiable and admirable qualities. Their weakness would never be found out except in a time of strain and purging. So long as things go quietly and smoothly, they do well, and even distinguish themselves. A day comes when manhood is put to the

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proof, and it is found they have none. It is a disagreeable discovery, and they like it as little as Peter in the story liked the loss of his shadow.

Let us, however, be exceedingly careful before we call any one destitute of backbone. It is a grave accusation, and it is often made on plausible grounds, and yet quite falsely. There are those who come very slowly to a conclusion, and are yet the most immovable and staunch of all once they have reached it. They are inaccessible to sneers and threats. They are not touched by blandishment. They may even be somewhat dull in the apprehension of argument. But they seek to know their duty, and once they know it they do it at all costs. *Nunc demum redit animus.* They pass into the safest of all forms of enthusiasm, the enthusiasm that reposes on underlying sanity and moderation. They say to themselves with Hamlet, that in the very torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of their passion they must acquire and beget a temperance, for only thus can perfect and enduring deeds be done. Sometimes men of apparently warm zeal and simple purpose are the first to join the ranks, and alas the first also to turn their backs. Others who come in late, after sore perplexities and not unreasonable hesitation, have left behind them a ring of true heroism of which the echo in the corridors of time will never quite die. Even when the years wax, their courage does not wane. They can face declared enemies and lukewarm friends and long delay, and still be firm.

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Let us be careful, then, not to make confusions. There will be time enough to test us all.

Yet there are eels, and I will briefly note some of their characteristics. The naturalists say that "the best time for catching large eels is after heavy storms and floods." When the wind blows, and the tempest rises, and the floods break forth, then we discover the sad secret that in a time of fair weather might have been kept. The sausage-seller in Aristophanes addresses Cleon: "Yes, for it is with you as with eel-catchers, when the lake is still they take nothing, but if they stir up the mud they have good sport; so have you when you disturb the State." But the hardest thing for those who disturb the State is not the opposition of foes; that is in the day's work. It is in the revelation of eels. It is the discovery that many who could do all that was needed in a quiet time, who knew the history of the past and the deeds of great men, and the reasons of their sacrifice, and could set them forth with the most moving eloquence in speech and print, had none of their courage, and could themselves encounter no real hazard. Yes, it is not a pleasant discovery, but there are compensations. We find out what iron there is in the blood of many who were contented to remain quiet and obscure till they saw that their help was needed. How often even on this earth the first are shown to be the last, and the last first.

The most unpleasant thing about eels, and that which has most prejudiced people against them, is

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their serpentine quality, their dreadful way of wriggling and writhing. It is well known that the eel has very great powers of defence. The difficulty of holding an eel is proverbial. It has been quaintly said, "Every one knows that to hold an eel with the naked hand is as abortive an attempt as detaining a pig by the tail, after it has been well soaped, or, in morals, to hold a knave to his word." There is a Latin proverb, "He's an eel and is off." John Leech has a drawing of the bursting of an aquarium. He renders inimitably the vain efforts of an old lady to pick up her favourite eel with a pair of tongs. For a man who has no backbone and does not disguise it, some sympathy may be felt. But the wriggling is repulsive. In every crisis we should have plain speech. You may say, "I have not made up my mind, and I must have time to think it over"; or you may say, "I have made up my mind, and I will face the fight"; or you may say, "I have made up my mind, and I am not going to fight." But to leave people in a perplexity—that is not good, that is not worthy. I have listened to speeches where the orator went on and on till it seemed as if there could be but one conclusion to his words. One sentence seemed inevitable, one sentence would have crowned the rest and given hope and heart to all. That sentence was not spoken, and the audience went home confused and miserable.

The eel, however, has always a great deal to say for himself. He has extraordinary ingenuity and

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resource in defence. You say, "He cannot possibly get over that. This new development must force him into decisive action." But you are mistaken. The eel can surmount obstacles which would at first sight appear to present unconquerable difficulties. I have read of young eels ascending the upright posts and gates of the waterworks at Norwich until they came into the dam above. Dr. Davy, a brother of Sir Humphry Davy, tells us that at Ballyshannon the eels ascended perpendicular rocks. Here is a part of his dialogue.

AMICUS: "This is indeed a curious sight. Here are some eels wriggling up a perpendicular rock. How is it they accomplish this?"

PISCATOR: "I believe they are able to accomplish it chiefly owing to two circumstances—their mucous, glutinous surface favouring adhesion, and their form small and slender. None of these eels, you perceive, are more than two or three inches long, and slender in proportion. Watch one that is now in progress ascending that perpendicular rock. See how it makes its tail a support, adhering by that whilst it projects itself upwards; and this done, now adhering by its trunk, it draws its tail after it. These are its steps, and the asperities of the surface of the rock are its stairs favouring its exertions."

There is one other characteristic of eels in all kingdoms, and that is the intensity of their objection to be skinned. Their skin was held to be particularly valuable, and the ancient Romans are said to

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have used it to whip naughty boys. All the same the eels do not like to part with it, and to take it from them is a matter of no common difficulty. I think perhaps that we should not attempt to skin them. We need not reason much with them, nor reproach them, nor hold them up to scorn. Everything teaches the wisdom of charity and patience. Perhaps some of us who think we have courage will ourselves turn out eels, and do infinitely more harm to the causes we have espoused than we could if we had never touched them. There are only a few men who can speak of their services, and these men are the last to boast. It is bitter to see desertion and cowardice and apathy when zeal would have made all the difference. But it has ever been so, and it is wisest and kindest to think of those who fail as "God's own unaccountables." A commentator on Shakespeare says well that the poet, while drawing a clear line between good and evil, does not fly into a passion with stupidity, or ignorance, or pretension, or even meanness. He knows that these are represented in Parliament, and by fathers of families and respectable householders. He looks on many things which put the little ardent folk out of temper with his calm, slow, wise smile as though he would say, "If God can put up with all these creatures and ignoramuses, and simulations of human beings in His scheme of creation, there is no reason why I should fume and fret or denounce or *argue* with them. He finds room for them all in His plan; I'll

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make a place for them in mine." After all there are true soldiers left, and there is no need to think that treason has eaten into the heart-core of the commonwealth, and that men are willing to be slaves.

CHAPTER X

SWELLED HEAD

SWELLED HEAD is certainly one of the maladies of youth. It is the consequence of a sudden success, great or small. It is not to be confounded with conceit and cocksureness. These qualities are often to be observed where no success has been won. The tone of certainty, assurance, and arrogance in a young man may be a sign of weakness or, the sign of great power. Time will show. I remember the days when Lord Randolph Churchill was considered a mere mountebank, impertinent, ignorant, and foolish. But as he went on the nation began to discover that he had qualities. I recall his coming to Edinburgh and making some speeches which I read. Replying to the taunt that he was a young man, he said that if this was an evil, it was an evil that was steadily being cured. "By the mere process of survival we shall reach at last the summit of the way." After that I went on reading him. It was not wonderful that he had his way with the Conservative party, and became Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. Doubtless his last days were sad, but this was due largely to physical reasons. His work endures, for he was the most powerful agent in bringing Conservatism into harmony with the ideas of the

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populace. A far greater man, Lord Beaconsfield, had to climb his way. He failed in his first House of Commons speech, and was compelled to sit down amid roars of laughter, but he closed with the defiant assertion that the time would come when the House of Commons *would* hear him, and the time did come. It was perhaps a foolish thing to say, but it did not prove him to be a fool. Two of the best judges in the House, Mr. Sheil and Sir Robert Peel, saw in his speech the germs of future excellence, and Sheil was kind enough to give him wise counsel by which he profited.

Neither is Swelled Head a malady which follows on a very gradual success. Many people come to what they have by a slow ascent. They are not conscious one year of being better off than they were the year before. They have to take a period of years ere they can be sure that they have made any progress. Their success creeps on them, and they are hardly aware of it, and therefore show no consciousness of superiority. Nor is Swelled Head to be confused with the settled complacency, rising sometimes to pomposity, of prosperous people, the kind of people who are called Sir Joseph or Sir Robert, types so familiar that a caricaturist could almost draw them in his sleep. For this kind of egotism there is no cure, and it has its comic and pleasing side. In that little-known but ever-refreshing book, Canning's *Literary Remains*, there is an admirable sketch of Erskine. He is made to perorate as fol-

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lows at a meeting of the Friends of Freedom: "Mr. Erskine concluded by recapitulating, in a strain of agonising and impressive eloquence, the several more prominent heads of his speech:—He had been a soldier and a sailor, and had a son at Winchester School—he had been called by special retainers, during the summer, into many different and distant parts of the country—travelling chiefly in post-chaises—he felt himself called upon to declare that his poor faculties were at the service of his country—of the free and enlightened part of it at least—he stood here as a man—he stood in the eye, indeed in the hand, of God—to whom (in the presence of the company and waiters) he solemnly appealed—he was of noble, perhaps Royal Blood—he had a house at Hampstead—was convinced of the necessity of a thorough and radical Reform—his pamphlet had gone through thirty editions, skipping alternately the odd and even numbers—he loved the Constitution, to which he would cling and grapple—and he was clothed with the infirmities of man's nature—he would apply to the present French rulers (particularly Barras and Rubel) the words of the poet—

"Be to their faults a little blind,
Be to their virtues very kind;
Let all their ways be unconfined,
And clap the padlock on their mind!"

'And for these reasons, thanking the gentlemen who had done him the honour to drink his health, he should

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propose 'Merlin, the late Minister of Justice, and Trial by Jury!'"

I may also note that the self-esteem common among people of small gifts and less performance should not be too rashly disturbed. It is the armour in which they fight the world. It protects them from the blows of fate. The breaking down of vanity may often mean the breaking down of the whole personality. It is not strong enough to meet the world unclothed, unarmed.

Nor should it be thought for a moment that Swelled Head is the invariable result of even great success. I have witnessed repeatedly and near at hand the fortunes of young men who became famous almost as suddenly as Byron did. It might well raise one's whole estimate of human nature to witness the genuine modesty, simplicity, humility, and kindness which were carried unaltered through the novel and testing strain. I have seen such success make men more humble and more anxious to do the best that ever they could. But I have seen and heard of instances where the result was different. Let it be remembered that a very small success intoxicates just as much as a great victory. In the land of the Lilliputians, to which most of us belong, the difference of the breadth of a nail in stature crowns a man king.

How does Swelled Head show itself?

Sometimes in extreme forms. Men have been known to go mad after a succession of fever fits.

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Men have also been known to become ashamed of their own fathers and mothers, to deny their source as a quadroon denies his blood. They have even become ashamed of their toiling, faithful wives. But I do not say that such manifestations are of everyday occurrence.

The disease of Swelled Head may show itself either in the ungenial or in the genial way. Sudden success will make one man seclude himself from the vulgar herd. He becomes cold, proud, inaccessible. He shuns the haunts of his fellow-workers. He repels what he takes to be their rude familiarities. I have known famous young men who were only to be approached through a series of rooms. You have to deal with somebody in the hall, and then with somebody in another room, and still perhaps with another. And if you pass all your trials you might be ushered into the august presence. This has been told to me: it is not an experience of my own. No human being ever lived for whom I should face such perils. This ungenial form of Swelled Head shows itself also in censoriousness. This is particularly the case when the successful man has for long had a very poor opinion of his kind, and was hardly in circumstances to utter it. From his little temporary eminence he launches his darts right and left. Most of the savage and reckless things said in this world are the result of Swelled Head. When people are struggling they cannot afford to say them. When they find their true place they neither think them nor

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say them, but are disposed to judge their companions in the hard battle very charitably. Another ungenial symptom of the Swelled Head is imperiousness. This is a world where wills are crossed and thwarted. We get used to it most of us, and come to see that it is good for us. But a young man conscious of great powers suffers in the process. When he mounts his throne he becomes an Oriental despot. One of our authors some years ago had a dangerous illness, during which he received surprising proofs of the impression he had made upon the world. As soon as he recovered he commenced a number of law-suits. The instance is quite typical. Last among the signs of this form of Swelled Head is pose, what is called side. You meet your friend after his triumph, and he does not cut you. In fact he is quite willing to converse with you, but there is an unwonted majesty in his accent, a weight of responsibility on his brow, a high dignity in his manner, and oracular and even Orphic style in his utterance, and generally a very strong reminder that the relations between him and you cannot be what they once were. You may be invited to his house, but if so you must sleep in a garret, and you must not expect that his equals shall be asked to meet you. Very likely you will note about this time that your old correspondent has altered the form of his signature. The letters of his name are larger, and there are more twirls and flourishes.

There are genial symptoms also, so genial occa-

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sionally that they make a distinct addition to the gaiety of life. A good many years ago I was wont to dine once a week with two or three friends. A man known to all of us had leapt into an immense popularity. He was a most companionable being, and we saw more of him after his success than before it. But his behaviour furnished us with tales, which if it were fair to write them down, would give some amusement to the reader. They helped me very much in getting through a winter of exceptionally bitter east winds. The genial form of Swelled Head shows itself in bragging, sheer, unadulterated, unabashed, endless bragging. A man will talk about the compliments paid to him, about the wonder of his achievements, about the magic of his conquests, about the magnetic force by which he attracts and subdues, and he will talk about nothing else. If he reads the newspapers, it is only to find allusions to his performances. If he ever listens to you, which is very unlikely, as you are not a great person, it is to sniff up incense. He is entertaining for a time, and it gives one contentment to see a human being in a world like this so perfectly satisfied with his fate. Sometimes Swelled Head shows itself in a tendency to over-advise. One of my oldest and shrewdest friends thinks that this is the surest of all symptoms. The victim conveys an underlying suggestion of potentiality in all his assertions—"If I were you I would"—"Had I been consulted." If he had been present at the incubation of the eggs of the common

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goose these eggs would have yielded cygnets. If the patient has been successful in any one thing he will advise you in everything. Ignorance never causes him to falter. Theodore Hook, on meeting such a man accosted him with the words: "Excuse me, sir, but are you anybody in particular?" Whenever a man takes to teaching the art of ovisuction you may be sure of his case. All is meant very kindly. The success puts the man on better terms with humanity, but as he visibly condescends, it does not put humanity on better terms with him. Extravagance is an occasional symptom of Swelled Head. By a stroke of good fortune a man makes a large income, and all his ideas expand. He takes it for granted that the income will continue and even increase. So he launches out in every direction, with the result of making his whole life a burden to himself. He is often very hospitable and very generous, but there are base folks who will take what he can give them, and laugh at him all the time. Sensitiveness is another sign. Anything like criticism rouses extreme irritation. Even to express a difference of opinion is an offence.

I have kept to the last the most dangerous form perhaps in which Swelled Head exhibits itself. The exalted being imagines himself above rules. He is emancipated. If he is an author he takes it for granted that anything from his pen is of value. He does not need to strive and toil. He has a right to special treatment from his publishers. If he chooses to rewrite his proofs, and thus double the cost of

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production, the publisher must make no complaint. Engagements he may repudiate at will. There is no worse sign of any man than this. If he is in business he does not need to keep hours in the mechanical and slavish fashion of the past. Holidays he is free to take whenever he pleases, and no one must take offence if he forgets or breaks a promise. What he would not tolerate for a moment from any of his own servants he thinks he has a right to do without challenge. The truth is, of course, that any success in business, if it is to continue, implies a more sedulous diligence and a more determined industry. *Noblesse oblige.*

The prognosis in this malady, to use the phrase of the medical dictionaries, is very favourable. It is almost always curable. This is because there are so many able and willing physicians who are eager to deal with it gratuitously. This is an extraordinary fact. A young man may take to vice or to drinking, and hardly anybody will say a word to arrest his descent. Even very kindly people will accelerate the downfall of a tippler by their mistaken hospitality. How few have the courage and the goodness to speak frankly to a young man who is going wrong. It may be said that they refrain because they do not wish to give offence. I am afraid the excuse is insufficient. When any one has Swelled Head there is no reluctance to offend him. On all sides men take up the cudgels and strike as hard as

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they can. George Meredith, in *The Shaving of Shagpat*, has expounded for us the value of the thwackings.

“Lo! of hundreds who aspire,
Eighties perish—nineties tire!
They who bear up in spite of wrecks and wracks,
Were seasoned by celestial hail of thwacks.

’Tis the thwacking in this den
Maketh lions of true men!
So we are nerved to break the clinging mesh
Which tames the noblest efforts of poor flesh.”

But that is the ordinary discipline of life, to which we must submit manfully. The other is special, very painful, and should not be needed. Doubtless it is administered often from envy, but that does not make it more easy. Men are drawn very much to those who remained unspoiled, uncorrupted after shining triumphs. On the other hand, the punishment of Swelled Head may be lifelong. Ground is lost which can never be recovered; acts of recklessness are remembered when brave and fine deeds are forgotten; gulfs open between friends over which no bridge is thrown.

CHAPTER XI

THE VALUE OF A MARGIN

THE Swiss tradition of William Tell is now said to be without historic foundation, but it makes a good story all the same. Gessler, the Steward of the Duke of Austria, perpetrated atrocious cruelties on the inhabitants of the Forest Cantons in his master's name. He put the Ducal hat of Austria on a pole in the market-place of Altdorf, and threatened with merciless punishment any one who passed it without uncovering. William Tell failed to do reverence to the hat, and was sentenced to be put to death unless he could hit an apple placed on his son's head. He did it. "What," asked Gessler, "would you have done with the second arrow in your bow?" "Shot you if I had killed my child." It was because Tell had a second arrow that he was able to send the first straight to its mark. In other words, the second arrow is the margin, and his feat shows the value of a margin.

There ought to be a margin in the matter of money. People should live within their incomes. Hackneyed though the quotation is, I cannot pass over Mr. Micawber's famous saying. He solemnly conjured David Copperfield to take warning by his fate, and to observe that if a man had £20 a year for

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his income, and spent £19, 19s. 6d. he would be happy, but that if he spent £20, 1s. he would be miserable. Mr. Micawber was a man of unquenchable spirits, and rose easily to the height of earthly bliss when his troubles were removed. But even he was sometimes in the depths. By the way, a friend of mine complained the other day that Dickens had made Micawber successful in the Colonies. He thought that Micawber could never have been successful anywhere. I doubt it. There is nothing so precious in a new country as an unbounded hopefulness. In *Martin Chuzzlewit* Dickens catches splendidly the indomitable confidence and assurance of the emigrants to Eden when in their worst plight. They were in rags and in hunger, and yet they talked about the finest country in the world and the decadence of poor old England. It is a spirit like this that conquers a new country, so I have always believed that Mr. Micawber did fairly well in Port Middlebay, that he did become a magistrate, and that the cheering with which Mr. Micawber was received defied description. Again and again it rose and fell like the waves of ocean, and a tear sprang into the manliest eye of the ninety-four eyes present when Mr. Micawber warned the younger portion of his audience from the shoals of ever incurring pecuniary liabilities which they were unable to liquidate. However, we are not all so buoyant as Mr. Micawber, and I am pretty sure that much of the misery in life comes from people living beyond their incomes, and suffering constantly from

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the resulting anxieties and humiliations. A shrewd business man told me not long ago that he was convinced the practice was increasing, that men with moderate incomes, dependent on their exertion, were more and more given to spending the last penny and had rarely a £5 note to spare. The literary classes are blamed especially for this kind of disturbing extravagance, whether justly or not I cannot say. In any case, Mrs. Oliphant, by her own confession, through all her active career, lived beyond her income. She had magnificent health and courage and industry, and yet it told upon her. She could not make an effort after self-control and economy. She never knew quite at the beginning of the year how the ends would come together at Christmas. There were always troubles and debts and forestalling of money earned. She had generally eaten up the price of a book before it was printed. "I ought to have been worn out by work and crushed by care half a hundred times by all rules, but I never was so. Good day and ill day have balanced with each other, and I got through year after year. It was in its way an immoral, or at least an unmoral mode of life, dashing forward in the face of all obstacles, and taking up all burdens with a kind of levity, as if my strength and resource could never fail. If they had failed I should have been left in the direst bankruptcy, and I had no right to reckon upon being always delivered at the critical moment. I should think any one who did so blamable now." She had

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nothing of the grace of thrift. She could not deny herself. She must always have the best for her sons and for herself. She would travel first-class in the most expensive trains; she would live in the best hotels; and she would educate her sons at Eton and Oxford in spite of all warnings. She got through wonderfully, and left, if I remember rightly, a few hundred pounds. But it is impossible not to see that her life and work were greatly marred by this recklessness. She professed to care nothing that her work was spoiled. "What is the reputation of a circulating library to me? Nothing, and less than nothing—a thing the thought of which now makes me angry that any one should for a moment imagine I cared for that, or that it made up for any loss. . . . In the meantime, it was good to have kept the pot boiling, and maintained the cheerful household fire so long, though it is smouldering in darkness now." Much more grave was the effect on her sons. They made her last days miserable, and she came to see that she herself had spoiled them. She had accustomed them to the easy going on of all things, never letting them see her anxieties, or know that there was a difficulty about anything, till their minds were formed to that habit, and all thought of labour and necessity was taken away. "It was a kind of forlorn pleasure to me that they had never wanted anything, but this turns it into a remorse." Very few people have the amazing courage of Mrs. Oliphant, and even if a man who lives extravagantly keeps an

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easy mind there are others whose happiness he is responsible for, who suffer very deeply sooner or later. It is one of the mysteries of life that people should try to keep up false appearances, that they live in a style which their earnings do not justify. In this way they incur the contemptuous astonishment of outsiders; they grieve their own friends; they mortgage the peace of the future, for none of us should live as if we were always to be as prosperous as we are now. The clouds are coming up. There will be less room for us by and by, and by a little carefulness and a little self-denial we may brighten immeasurably the close of life for ourselves and for our own. One can see in the lives of Dickens and Thackeray how very bitter carking care about money was to them, how the whole spirit of Dickens rose fiercely against it. Did Thackeray ever recover the pecuniary misfortunes of his early years? The iron went deep into his soul. No doubt the secret of living within one's income is mainly to be found in the wise choice of a house, for according to a man's house so will his expenses be, do what he may.

There ought also to be as far as possible a margin of time for work. That is, if you know that something has to be done at a certain time, you cannot begin the preparation too soon. I remember a country minister who rendered some words remarkably. He said, "I like to find the text of my Sunday sermon on Monday, and keep it simpering up and down in my mind all the week." I suspect he meant sim-

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mering. There is no doubt that the longer a subject is thought over the more adequately it is treated when the time comes for treatment. There are apparent exceptions. Sometimes a man will write his best on the spur of the moment on a theme which has suggested itself five minutes before he began. But that is because his mind was unconsciously trained to deal with that topic. If you choose a subject and settle the main line of treatment, all you have to do is to read and think. Read what? Read anything, anything that is not utterly trivial. Once fix any subject in your mind, and allusions to it will leap out from the most unexpected quarters. I read some days ago an essay on Ticonderoga, by Pierre Loti. Never having read anything about the place before, I was fascinated with the freshness and the delicate beauty of Loti's descriptions, and thought I should like to know more of it. That evening I took up De Morgan's *Budget of Paradoxes*, a book which never fails me, one of those books that you can never open without learning something. At the page I opened there was a story of Ticonderoga. I mention this simply as one of innumerable experiences. How often one reads and hears essays which have a germ of goodness. There is a thought in them; there are perhaps gleams in them. But they are thoroughly underworked; they are destroyed for want of adequate meditation.

For there ought to be a margin of knowledge as well as a margin of time for work. One literary man

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said to another that he had to go through a great deal of reading for his new book; so much matter that seemed likely at first had in the end to be rejected. "Yes," replied his friend, "you can only walk on the width of your feet, and yet you want more to walk on." It would be very uncomfortable to walk sixty feet on a narrow plank. Yet this is what many people are doing. There is no margin in their knowledge. There are men who one evening get an introduction to Hegel by reading a chapter of Dr. Hutchison Stirling. The next day they manage to work into print their confused impression, and talk about Hegel as if he had been their master for a quarter of a century. The trick is rarely successful. Those who write in that way are sure to be caught. It is not possible to mistake what is written from a ripe fulness of knowledge from the mere quackery of hasty, superficial, pretentious ignorance. For a good article or a good book the author should have twice as much material gathered as is ultimately worked in. I saw it said the other day that the future of any boy passionately fond of reading was assured, and I can well believe it. The day comes when we read too much for a purpose—for an examination, for an article, for a book. It is well to spend much time in youth reading the best with no ulterior view. All comes to its use in the end.

We should give ourselves a margin of time, that we may not waste energy in hurry and flurry. It

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is proverbial that the men who do least think themselves busiest. If you want a bit of work done well and done promptly you go to a man who seems over-occupied. Fussy people, people who undertake more than they can carry through, people who work by spurts and fits and starts, are apt to spoil their lives. They may do splendidly for a time, but they break down, and the tortoise comes in before the hare. I cannot bear people who are hurried, who have no leisure for a chat, who puff and steam and shriek all the time they are working. The noisiest engines I know of are those of the very worst railway in this country.

Archbishop Tait was a tremendous worker, quite as great a worker as Bishop Wilberforce. The absence of fussiness was one of his peculiar characteristics. It was the rarest possible thing to see him in a hurry about anything. "This total absence of fuss and flurry used to deceive his guests in the oddest way. I remember an American ecclesiastic who was staying at Lambeth at a very busy time asking me on the second or third morning if the Archbishop was holiday-making. He seemed to have nothing particularly to do, and was constantly walking in the garden. The doctor who knew him best ascribed to this steady calmness of manner and movement the fact that he was able to resist so long the dangers attaching to an enfeebled heart. But he did not adopt his manner for that purpose. It was as a protest against the excited restlessness that is so com-

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mon, the idea that a busy man must be a man in a chronic state of perspiration.

There ought in every life to be a margin of leisure, not merely for rest, but for the possessing of one's soul. The busiest man ought to be able to spend part of the day alone, frequently without doing anything. He should be able to mix with pleasure in quiet society. He should find some part of the day to give to those at home. I knew a business man in an American town who was so absorbed in his business that he could not keep away from it. He had a charming family, and he came back to dine with them every evening at seven. After dinner he used to go back to his office and work till eleven, returning about midnight thoroughly weary. And so life went on. But as the golden sentence has it, "Life is not for learning, neither is life for working, but learning and working are for life."

It ought perhaps to be said that there must not be too much margin about life. Wastefulness in money matters is very bad, but miserliness is infinitely worse. A man may be very careless and yet keep his soul, but if he is too careful he will lose his soul. You cannot make a friend of a miser. A miser must live and die without love. You cannot gain the whole world and keep your own soul. Life should have a margin, but there are lives which are nearly all margin, from which every living line and letter have passed away. Neither is it good to have too

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much leisure and too much money. Again and again I have met friends of the late James Cotter Morison, and they agree that none of his writings give the faintest impression of his real and extraordinary powers. They account for this by saying that his circumstances were too easy. He had no external pressure. He had unlimited time on his hands, and was excessively fastidious in style. In conversation he showed himself the master of almost any company, and he was not at all indolent. Neither did he attempt too many subjects. What he did has its merits, and was not entirely without result, but it was very little in comparison with the power and culture of his mind. Not too much margin, then, but some margin is what we should seek.

CHAPTER XII

SAILING AGAINST THE WIND

THE late Mr. P. G. Hamerton, as many will remember, was much addicted to sailing on French rivers, and here and there liked to dwell upon the analogies between sailing and human life. Every one, or at least every preacher, has more or less used nautical similes. He has spoken of the tossing on the rough ocean, which is life, and the haven of rest, which is death. He has compared the fair wind and rippling sea to prosperity, and the tempest to adversity. I wish to write something about beating against the wind, which is so familiar an experience in navigation. Every properly conducted vessel, so the authorities tell us, can sail against the wind. Going against the wind by the power of a machine is opposing one force by another, but to beat to windward in a sailing vessel is a test of skill. It means that the wind is not resisted, but employed. The opposing force continues, but the opposition is called into aid. Now, this is a parable of life, and I may expatiate upon it for a little.

Let me take, for example, solitude. One of the chief aggravations of reverse is that it often throws a man out of congenial company, and dooms him to loneliness. But if he is wise he will take the loneliness

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and make it serve him—use it so that it shall bring him into better company than any that he has lost. I met the other day an old college companion whom I had not seen for many years. He used to be a country minister, but has long preached in Melbourne. We talked about the difference between the country and the city, and the desire of many men to get away from the one into the other. I remarked that the isolation of the country, the want of congenial fellowship, was deeply felt by many who had been used to the most perfect of friendships—those between fellow-students. He replied that he had never experienced this. In his country charge there were two men who satisfied his desire for society. One was the miller and one was the schoolmaster. Both were gifted and educated men, and the miller especially had a mind and a way in which Carlyle would have delighted. It is the old story. We crane our necks and look to the ends of the earth for that which is beside us. In nearly every place perhaps by a little trouble one may turn strangers into helpful friends. Even if it were not so, even if there were exceptions, most of us might, and ought to, find in our own households much more than we look for. It is necessary for those who would live happily together that they should try to show their best to one another. They should try to show the best of their minds. All things should be in common. Every pleasant experience, whether it be of books or of life, ought to be shared. I am confident that existence is maintained

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at a much lower level of happiness than it should be, simply because those who are bound by the closest natural ties do not know how to make each other happy—grudge the time that should be given to the arraying of the soul. Then consider how many precious hours are wasted by merely idle talk. Go into a club and see men aimlessly gossiping through long afternoons. (Solitude is the mother country of the strong. It gives time for reading, for study, and for labour. If it is used in these ways, then we can sail against the wind.) Of course, it is often used differently, just as a man ignorant of sailing is helpless in the midst of a sea agitated by a steady breeze, and drifts to leeward, the unintelligent victim of the great natural forces.

Another way in which we can sail against the wind is making good use of bad health. Every one has observed the amazing way in which invalids survive and strong men go down. I took up this evening the first volume of Sydney Dobell's life, and read again the pathetic story of his early married life. His wife, always delicate, became a complete invalid, and seemed on the verge of the grave. Many pages detail the hopes and fears of her anxious husband. As it turned out, Sydney Dobell died at fifty, and his wife survived him for many years, dying, I think, when she was nearer eighty than seventy. I knew long ago a lady so delicate that every time one parted from her it seemed like a final leave-taking, but, so far as I know, she is alive to-day. On the other hand,

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I call to mind the two strongest and healthiest men I have ever known. One of them was a novelist, the other a college don. Neither of them ever knew what illness was till they were close upon the end. The novelist over-exerted himself, transgressed every law of health, and was struck down by a mysterious disease, to which he succumbed. The college don could never be induced to take care of himself or adapt his clothing to the weather. One day, when very slightly clad, he went to a boat-race in an east wind, and it killed him. I have read of a physician whose health broke down so completely that his life was in danger. He took himself in hand with the same care as he was wont to give to his patients, and with perfect success. He took care in small things, observed the rules of health, even the least of them, avoided dangers, and became well. The great physicians nowadays insist upon the scrupulous observance of small rules. No law is violated with impunity, no law is obeyed without reward. And what is true in the physical sphere is true in the moral and spiritual spheres. By care and management invalids can accomplish much good work. They must not work too long, but if they work regularly and concentrate while they are working, they will make no contemptible show at the end. Again, there are compensating elements for cruel deprivations if we will look for them. I knew an ardent and voracious reader whose eyes became weak. He was allowed to read two hours a day, and he told me that he was no worse off than in days when he

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could go on for eight hours. The limitation made him select his reading. Great readers, if they will think of it, will discover that much of the time they spend in reading is practically wasted. They read rubbish or they read inattentively, and straightway forget.

The same law holds in cases of discouragement. Moralists, so far as I remember, have hardly studied sufficiently the effect of prolonged discouragement on the human spirit. It acts upon some natures like poison. To go on doing one's best year after year without a single sign of prosperity may sap the whole strength of life, leave the nature without hope, without courage, without buoyancy, without the power of recovery. Many years ago I heard a preacher say that success was a very good thing. "I wish," he said, "I had had more of it. I should have been a better man." Few things can develop well without sunshine. Growth in the dark is apt to be distorted. A man who had worked for nearly twenty years under the most cruel, oppressive, and discouraging circumstances at last obtained relief. He told me that long years after his change to happier circumstances, he used to be visited by dreams in which he was taken back to his past and yoked to the old weary task. He wakened with horror and relief to find himself a comparatively free man. Yet without difficulty, without discouragement, a nature never becomes strong. Sailing against the wind is an essential part of education. Without it the faculties are

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never exercised, the man never becomes strong. We all know people who cannot bear to be in a minority. They must have behind them some gust of popular feeling before they can develop enthusiasm. But strong men can hold on and be patient, and make progress even when things seem dead against them. They know their own mind, and go on calmly. These are the true leaders. There is a deep truth in the old saying that when things are at the worst they always mend. But you say, when do you know that the worst has come? I reply that there is a moment of sickening misery which brings its own message. We know then that any change must be a change for the better. And there are changes often if we do not faint, changes as welcome as they are surprising. For months and perhaps for years we do not see where they are to come from. We do not know perhaps that they are coming till the moment of their arrival. But they do come to the stout heart. It is wise, then, not to lay plans for ten years ahead on the assumption that the conditions in which we now find ourselves will be permanent. It is wise to remember that the conditions are changing, and that we may find ourselves far happier, far lighter of heart, than we had dared to dream.

Once more, poverty, if it is bravely and wisely borne, may greatly better us. It is well for us to have the complexity of things reduced to simplicity. Once, perhaps, we lived in a little room and paid four shillings a week. Now we are in a mansion which

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costs £500 a year. Are we really happier in the mansion than we were in the small room? Could we go back again and be content and find our own minds a kingdom? I do not wish to cant—far from it. If poverty were in itself a desirable thing people would not struggle so hard to escape from it. Poverty often visits us most severely in its effect on those we love. The blow comes very near the heart when we cannot give to some poor sufferer the alleviations which might give her a chance. All this is very true, and yet it is true that continued prosperity in most cases enervates, that the stronger virtues do not develop themselves when everything goes smoothly and easily, that all sunshine makes the desert. Poverty may serve us well if it teaches us where the essence of true life lies, and it may prepare us for the more worthy use of riches. We may beat to windward in poverty. When we no longer go with a fair wind and have to tack constantly against a foul one, we may cease to be spoiled children.

CHAPTER XIII

“OBSERVE THE FLIGHT OF YONDER SOLITARY CROW”

WHEN the villain of the old-fashioned melodrama finds his antagonist too much for him, he suddenly points upwards during a pause in the combat and cries out, “Observe the flight of yonder solitary crow,” or words to that effect. The unsuspecting victim looks up, and the villain takes advantage of his defenceless situation to plant his stage sword between the other’s arm and ribs.

Robert Houdin, the great conjurer, in his two most entertaining books, *The Cheating of the Greeks Unveiled*, and the *Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*, tells us that this is precisely the principle on which conjuring tricks are performed. Houdin was the founder of the modern school of conjuring. He was full of inventive genius, and discarded contemptuously the clumsy tricks of what he called the *false bottom* school. So great was the reputation he acquired, that the French Government sent him on a sort of roving commission to Algeria, in order that he might discredit the prestige of the *Marabouts*, the wonderful workers who had attained extraordinary influence over the Arabs by their pretended miracles. Houdin was not above the use of in-

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genious mechanical devices. In his work on the Cheating of the Greeks, which deals mainly with card tricks, he tells us that an ingenious swindler's instrument is a snuff-box, on which there is a small medallion, about the size of a franc, containing a miniature executed with considerable art. The players naturally observe this, and sometimes it is passed round to be inspected. When the game has begun, the Greek takes a pinch of snuff, which enables him to put the box down again nearest to him. But at the same moment he has pressed an invisible spring, which substitutes for the miniature a small convex glass, from which he derives considerable profit. In fact, when the Greek has the deal, as his mirror is under the cards he gives his opponent, they are reflected in it. From time to time the Greek restores the medallion, and offers a pinch of snuff to his victim. But all such contrivances, he earnestly insists, are quite useless without dexterity. “To succeed as a conjurer three things are essential: first dexterity, second dexterity, and third dexterity.” There is needed not only dexterity of the hand, but also of the eye and the tongue. The vast majority of conjuring tricks are variations of the same broad idea—namely to cause the disappearance of a given object, and to make it reappear in a different place from that in which it has been ostensibly put. The details may vary, but the principle is the same. Now in order to accomplish this satisfactorily, the attention of the audience

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must be diverted. They must observe the flight of yonder solitary crow. So long as the eyes of the audience are upon the performer, it is absolutely impossible to move the hands so quickly as to abstract or to replace any object without being perceived. But it is very easy to do this unnoticed if the audience are looking another way at the time. Therefore the most necessary, as it is the most difficult accomplishment for a conjurer to acquire, is to divert attention from himself. It will not be sufficient to ask them to look in another direction. They will suspect the trick, and look on all the more keenly. According to Houdin the chief requisite is to have a good eye. That is, the performer, by an earnest, convinced gaze in a particular direction, will draw insensibly the eyes of others with him. If, on the other hand, he furtively glances at the hand which is performing some function that should be kept secret, the game is up. It is because so much mental training and adroitness are needed for conjuring, that as a rule explanations of how tricks are performed do not help the ordinary reader. He can make no use of the instruction until he has acquired the skill to use it. Nevertheless, Houdin told so much in his books that his rivals did their best to limit the circulation, and I believe the first is practically unknown, while the second was not available till it was translated by Professor Hoffmann, and published by Messrs. Routledge.

The place of diversions in life is a matter of no

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small moment, and as usual the etymology is instructive. Diversion is the act of diverting aside from a course, turning into a different direction or to a different point or destination. Very soon it passes into the secondary meaning of sport, or play, or pastime; that which diverts, turns, or draws the mind from care, business, or study thus rests and amuses.

I am copying from the *Century Dictionary*, which gives the following quotation from Addison: “We will now for our diversion entertain ourselves with a set of riddles, and see if we can find a key to them among the ancient poets.” Steele says: “The necessities of hunger and thirst were his greatest diversions from the reflections of his lonely condition.” There is a third technical meaning. Diversion is the act of drawing the attention and force of an enemy from the point where the principal attack is to be made. Of this there are many illustrations in the history of war. What brought the fortunes of the Camisarts to their nadir was a trick of Montrevel. He gave out that he proposed travelling in his coach with a very small body-guard. Having started in this fashion, he managed to join his army, which had been so disposed as completely to encircle the enemy. Cavalier, the brave Camisart General, fell into the trap. He and his troops were hemmed in on all sides by an enemy sixfold their number. They fought the ground inch by inch. Five hundred were killed, and not one was

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taken prisoner, but the result was the Treaty of Nismes.

It is not my habit to deal with political issues in these letters, but it may safely be said that the trick of diversion is by no means obsolete among our statesmen. When a political party has little accounts which it is inconvenient to settle, there is a great temptation to divert attention from muddling and blundering to something new. "Observe the flight of yonder solitary crow." But very great dexterity is needed. If the people imagine that they are being hoaxed, they concentrate their observation in a hostile and dangerous manner. One of the strangest episodes in Mr. Gladstone's career was his appeal to the people in 1874. The Liberal Government had not been doing well. A spirit of uneasiness had settled down into a condition of listless inaction. The bye-elections went badly, and the Premier became impatient of the general lethargy. Like a thunderbolt came the news that there was to be a Dissolution, and that Mr. Gladstone was to appeal to the constituencies on a Budget. There was very little specification of other measures in his manifesto, but the Premier promised that the Income-tax was to be abolished, that assistance was to be afforded to the ratepayers, and that the advocates of a free breakfast-table were not to be forgotten. The voters were to be hurried to the polls under the spell of the proffered boon, and everything besides was to be forgotten. The British taxpayer

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at that time did not feel his burdens as he feels them now. When shall we have a political leader promising the abolition of the Income-tax? Be that as it may, the voters of 1874 thought they had found out Mr. Gladstone trying the trick of the solitary crow. He was denounced even by the most faithful of his own friends, and the General Election ended in disaster for his party. The moral is that the trick, while it sometimes may succeed, is very dangerous. Its whole prospect of success is the chance that the voter may unsuspectingly follow the eyes of the wizard.

But diversion, in the fullest sense of the word, plays a very great and salutary part in life. There is nothing so terrible as the concentration of thought and energy in one channel. Sometimes a particular subject fastens on the mind with a terrible intensity. It lays an iron and immortal grasp upon the spirit. Night and day the victim is never free. He dreams of one thing by night, he wakens to it in the morning, all the day it grips him and refuses to let go. If that continues long enough the end is madness. The domination of the fixed idea, to the exclusion of every other interest in life, is a form of insanity. Sometimes it is love, or rather the exaggeration of love, as we see it in the letters written by Keats to Fanny Brawne during his last illness. Keats was certainly mad when he wrote them. Sometimes it is remorse, but remorse can very seldom write itself out. Sometimes, as in the case

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of William Cowper, it is religious madness. Cowper became persuaded that an injunction to suicide and a subsequent sentence of condemnation were revelations from heaven, and from that hour he lived in his own conviction a doomed man. The wonder was that he was able to live at all, but what soothed him was small diversions from his despairing thoughts. He fed the chickens, he was continually employed in gardening, and talked freely about his favourite employment. He took care of three leverets, which grew up as tame as cats, and as fond of human society. He resolved to be a carpenter, and constructed boxes, tables, stools, besides bird and squirrel cages. He exercised much of his ingenuity on an orange-tree and three myrtles. These suggested a greenhouse which he built with his own hands, and which afforded him amusement for a longer time than any expedient to which he had fled from the misery of having nothing to do. He took to reading Greek and Latin, and translated Homer. It was with that he was busy till within two years of his end. During these years he translated little Latin poems into English, or English poems into Latin. When he was dying the physician asked him how he felt. "Feel," he replied, "I feel unutterable despair."

In the ordinary, as well as in the extraordinary, way of life, the faculty of diversion is invaluable. It is often particularly useful in conversation. I have heard of a great business man who, when things

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became unpleasant in a discussion, had a trick of pulling out a drawer. In this drawer he kept some rare and curious objects. He would select one and show it, and the talk speedily became amicable. Sir Arthur Helps, whose writings are full of hard-won wisdom, says that a pleasant story will do more than almost anything else to relieve the tension in personal relations. Animals are often a great relief to the mind too busy with its work. The legend of St. John and the quail will be remembered, and the Irish saints in particular found great delight in pet animals. In fact to this the new feeling about the brute creation may be largely traced. It is also very helpful to have a variety of studies. In her life of George Grote, Mrs. Grote tells how the historian was diverted from the fond attention and sustained energy with which he worked at his *Greece* by an eager interest in science. She was at first alarmed, but came to feel that the diversion was salutary, and certainly it enriched Grote's subsequent work. Congenial scenery is a mighty stay to some minds. There are those who can live complacently in any place, however hideous, but there are others who simply cannot. If they are balked of their desire for natural beauty of the kind they love, they cannot go on. Of this Winckelmann is a striking example. He was a German heart and soul, and in a certain sense he remained a German. Even when he went to Italy his passionate friendships continued to be with Germans. But the scenery of Italy was the breath

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of his life. Latterly his imagination became morbidly homesick, and he actually meditated a violent break with his Roman ties. He started with feverish impatience on his journey to Berlin, and was thoroughly happy till he got to Verona. Scarcely an hour after an extraordinary change was observed in the expression of his countenance. He seemed to be overcome with a spasm of horror as the Alpine world opened before him. Suddenly he exclaimed that he would then turn back at once, and though he went forward to his death, it was in so strange a temper of mind that his companion thought him deranged. Friendship is a great diversion, and to accomplish its full work it should exist between human beings of different opinions, different attainments, and different pursuits. Live too much in the circle of fellow-workers, and you never escape the pressure of thought and work. This, I have no doubt, is the secret of the strange and apparently incongruous associations formed by many of the most gifted minds. They desired to escape from themselves and their prison-houses of toil, they sought to be recreated, in a word they needed and obtained diversion.

CHAPTER XIV

DRIVING A HOOP: A SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTMAS

Mrs. OLIPHANT tells us in her Autobiography that she was not a fluent talker. She was often silent in the midst of animated conversation. But she had one friend who made her and every one else talk. This was a wise and kind old lady, who by her gentle suggestions, her pertinent inquiries, and her encouraging looks, unlocked the lips of every one she met. Mrs. Oliphant says that the incitement given by this friend was very like driving a hoop. The comparison is not unhappy. I am qualified to judge, for I have driven a hoop with a very young companion not so many years ago as you might think. The hoop must be handled very tactfully at the start, but when it gets into the swing it acts of itself, requiring little or no aid. Most of us have known hostesses with the invaluable art of drawing out and mingling in friendly and interesting talk a whole company. It is a very rare talent, and there is always behind it much wisdom and unselfishness and sympathy.

Sometimes one may start a difficult conversationalist for the mere pleasure of hearing him talk. In this case the driving of the hoop is in a manner selfish, especially in a dialogue. I have read that

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the famous Master of Trinity, Dr. W. H. Thompson, had to be started in this way. He was a very formidable person. His snow-white hair, coal-black eyebrows, and parchment complexion awed every spectator, and the effect was increased by the critical wrinkles on his brow and the inscrutable coldness of his eyes. Once induced to speak, however, he could say the most brilliant and memorable things. Even when he was ordinary, which sometimes happened, his words borrowed force from his personality. That personality was so strong as to turn commonplace into epigram, and ordinary sarcasms into crushing hits. But such a man as Thompson was rather a talker than a conversationalist. He used to terrify his companions by the way in which he raised his brows to hear them when they ventured to say anything. Jowett, the Master of Balliol, was equally daunting, and at his silent breakfasts inflicted untold sufferings on bashful and ingenuous youths. But there were those who knew how to make Jowett talk—how to drive the hoop.

In most cases, however, driving the hoop is, especially with old people, a distinct triumph of altruism, for the talk of the great majority revolves happily and safely on a very few stories and on a very few subjects. All Scotsmen have known old gentlemen whose conversational stock-in-trade was a series of stories about Dr. Chalmers. Very often a continental journey in youth, with just a spice of adventure, comes to the front in later years, and is

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dwelt upon with ever-increasing delight to the speaker, and with, it must be confessed, a measure of suffering on the part of the hearers. More wearisome still, and not at all uncommon, is the self-justification of old people who have not been quite successful, or who have fallen into what may be considered indiscretions. In her powerful little story, *A Village Tragedy*, Mrs. Woods has rendered with quick sympathy and delicate touches of humour the character of Mrs. Pontin, the aunt of her heroine. Mrs. Pontin is a fine specimen of the Midland rustic. She was very conventional and respectable, but she had married James Pontin within a few months of her first husband's death. Ever afterwards her acquaintances were destined to hear in much detail the circumstances which had led to this breach of etiquette. If others did not give her a chance, Mrs. Pontin herself moved the talk towards the great theme. When her niece came to live with her she was initiated thus—

“Did you ever see your Aunt Susan?” asked Mrs. Pontin.

“No,” answered Annie, “but I've heard tell of her. They used to say I was like her. She went off in a decline, didn't she?”

“Yes, she was Benny's mother, and I always was that fond of Benny. If it hadn't been along of him and my hundred pounds as I couldn't get back I don't know as I should ever ha' married Pontin.”

She was always anxious to clear herself from the

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imputation of having been moved to her second marriage by any personal partiality for the bridegroom, and that it should be recognised that she acted throughout under the pressure of stern necessity. Conversely, the memory of any youthful triumph seems to strengthen at the last. The details of the victory are recited more often and more fondly. When the old people are allowed to tell their own story, they often listen very pleasantly to the talk of the young. With the young the difficulty to be overcome as a rule is that of shyness, and often the only method of overcoming it is to give oneself away in a personal confidence.

But the power of driving the hoop is applicable to other things. It is the tritest and yet nearly the most necessary of commonplaces that encouragement is sorely wanted in life. There is very little of it; as a rule, it is wholly beneficial; it is a gift which every one may impart. Nothing is more impressive than the immense courage and patience with which humanity bears its burdens. Men and women go through lives of little cheer, much sorrow, and unbroken toil, without a word of complaint. When Matthew Arnold retired from his duties as an inspector, he received a present from his teachers. In replying he laid aside completely the little affectations in which he sometimes indulged, and spoke from the heart. He told the teachers that when he began his work he was oppressed by the irksomeness of its

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duties, and felt for a time that they were almost unsupportable. But he met daily in the schools men and women discharging duties as irksome as his, and less well paid. He saw them making the best of it. He saw the cheerfulness and the efficiency with which they did their work, and he asked himself again, "How do they do it?" "Gradually it grew into a habit with me to put myself in their places, and try to enter into their feelings, to represent to myself their life, and I assure you I got many lessons from them." There are silent multitudes who never develop to their true beauty and happiness simply for lack of encouragement. The case of M'Kay, in *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*, comes to mind. He loved his wife, who would have given up every drop of blood in her body for him, but she had no opinions that were not his, and he was perpetually irritated by having before him an enfeebled reflection of himself. Happily he discovered his mistake before it was too late. "She became ill very gradually, and M'Kay began to see in the distance a prospect of losing her. A frightful pit came in view. He became aware that he could not do without her. He imagined what his home would have been with other women whom he knew, and he confessed that with them he would have been less contented. He acknowledged that he had been guilty of a kind of criminal epicurism; that he had rejected in foolish, fatal, nay, even wicked indifference the bread of life upon which he might have lived and

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thriven. His whole effort now was to suppress himself in his wife. He would read to her, a thing he never did before, and when she misunderstood, he would patiently explain; he would take her into his councils, and ask her opinion; he would abandon his opinion for hers, and in the presence of her children he always deferred to her, and delighted to acknowledge that she knew more than he did, that she was right and he was wrong. She was now confined to her house, and the end was near, but this was the most blessed time of her married life. She grew under the soft rain of his loving care, and opened out, not, indeed, into an oriental flower, rich in profound mystery of scent and colour, but into a blossom of the chalk down. Altogether concealed and closed she would have remained if it had not been for this beneficent and heavenly gift poured upon her."

There are those who encourage and exhilarate by their very presence, who bring warmth and light into every place they enter. "I shall never forget the smile with which he greeted me the first time I ever spoke to him, more than six-and-twenty years ago, in the library at Ladywood. I have no doubt that numbers will say the same thing. It seems to me, as I look back upon those days, that the life to every one of us was changed and exalted by an acquaintance with him. Always and everywhere he was himself, and what a self it was." Such was the testimony borne by the author of *John Inglesant* to

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an early friend. Then how much a word will do. Over thirty years one man recollects how another said to him in a crowded street, "That is very striking. I am very much obliged to you for telling me that."

A word of heartening from a schoolmaster in childhood will be remembered when a thousand things apparently much more important are lost in the azure. A word—how much it may mean! Bishop Fraser, of Manchester, was one of the most radiant natures in the world. When he died his friend Lord Lingen bore this testimony: "Both before and after he became a Bishop he not unfrequently stayed at my house; and I really can say without exaggeration that the very sight of him had the effect of sunshine both on the servants and ourselves. If ever there was a sociable and sympathetic man he was one, pleasantly inquisitive, and ready to talk to any one. "Which was the maid who cooked that nice dish?" said he one morning after he had read prayers to us all, referring to something he had praised at dinner the day before." I might pursue this train indefinitely, but I turn to a practical suggestion.

When Christmas approaches we all think about presents. Many of us have not very much to give. Many do not care for presents of the ordinary kind. We are satisfied with our possessions. What every one values in a present is its fitness, the kind thought of remembrance which it embodies. Why should we

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not this Christmas send out a batch of kind, affectionate, and encouraging letters? This at least is within the power of us all, and who knows what happiness we might give, what cheer, what strength, what hope? We can call to mind by a little thinking friends and acquaintances with whom life has passed but roughly during the year. Write to the friend far away who is fighting a hard battle, and tell him what you think of his constancy. Write to the sick friend who fancies herself of no use in the world, and tell her that her life matters much to you. Write to the author whose book you have liked. Send no advice—there is a great deal too much advice in the world—send encouragement, words of recognition, of gratitude, of affection, of admiration, and send such words especially to those who are living through a time of great stress and trial. Your letter may decide the issue of the conflict.

When we die I suppose most of us will be found to have cherished a very few things. When the desk is opened the possessions that have perhaps mattered most will be discovered. Then there will be surprises. In the life of Hugh Price Hughes we are told that he kept very few letters, but in searching through his desk his wife came upon one from Dr. Jenkins. Mr. Hughes after a fierce controversy sent in his resignation to the President of his Church. Dr. Jenkins wrote an affectionate and earnest dissuasion, beseeching him not to take that step. Very likely this letter meant more to Mr. Hughes

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than any of the costly gifts he received and deserved. If I were to covet any honour of authorship it would be this—that some letters of mine might be found in the desks of my friends when their life . struggle is ended.

CHAPTER XV

THE HOUSE OF ———

To see interesting, characteristic, and individual houses, you must go to a village or a country town. It is pleasant to visit the scene of a novel, and chose out the homes of the different characters. Whether Mr. Hardy confirms me or not, I am sure that I discovered in Marnhull the birthplace of Tess. When you live in a suburb it is much more difficult to people the different residences. In fact imagination alone cannot do it. You must stay some years in the place, and gradually gather facts and experiences. Then as things grow familiar, you find yourself giving certain houses names. So I have found it in a suburb which no curious mortal can ever find out. There is something very depressing in long rows of featureless, uniform buildings, but when you understand that they are all homes in name at least, the aspect of things is changed. You begin even to love the little villas rented from £20 to £30 a year. In some cases they are the homes of the disappointed, the lonely, and even the ill-deserving. In other cases there is within the humble walls all the radiance of youth and love and hope. It is terrible to be without a home, like the people one meets occasionally on the Continent. They are

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mostly childless couples, who have become intensely selfish. They tell you that they fled from the grey skies and cold winds of England. By and by you discover that they ran away from their responsibilities, and that as time goes on they hate the thought of returning to them. They live the most idle and the most profitless lives that can be imagined, and they deserve their miserable deaths. One day they are found sick and frightened by the waiter. They pass away in a crowded hotel to the disgust of the landlord, who will smuggle out their dead bodies by night. Their money must go to somebody. Whoever receives it is heartily glad, and not at all thankful. They are unmissed and unmourned, and who can say that their end is not well merited?

There are in our suburb abodes of gloom as well as places of joy, but I will not say much about the former. One house I call the House of Many Sorrows. It was built some twenty years ago by a prosperous city merchant. He had not lived in it six months before there came a great crisis in his affairs. He went to his man of business and told him that he must have an advance of £10,000 for a week. This would enable him to tide over his difficulties. The money was refused, whereupon the man took out a revolver and shot himself dead. Very soon the widow and family disappeared. Tenant came after tenant, but none stayed more than a few months, and every family that inhabited the house was visited with a heavy stroke of fate. I could tell

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some of the stories if it were not for the danger of identification. How it has fared with the occupants of the house during the last five or six years I do not know, but up till that time something ailed it. The place was cursed.

We had at one time the House of the Old Lady with the Knitting Needles. It was a very pretty place, but nobody lived in it long, for it was haunted. There was nothing very terrible about the ghost, but she always appeared. You went to sleep in a certain room and wakened to find beside you an old lady placidly knitting. When you spoke to her she went away—surely the gentlest, quietest, and least formidable of ghosts. But the tenants did not like her. There was great and increasing difficulty in letting the house (I myself was strongly warned against it), and now it has been thrown down and replaced by flats.

Another cottage with a garden and a high wall I name the House of Good Talk. It was so once upon a time, when it was inhabited by an editor who was both scholar and gentleman. He has been dead many years. He was a bachelor, always cheerful, and eminently social, though he had enough to depress him. He suffered from the double drain of a wasting lung and an expensive weekly paper. The journal he established himself, and carried through deep waters to the appearance but not the reality of success. This editor, indeed, fancied that he had achieved a great triumph when he brought the loss

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down to £40 a week. No man I ever knew more intensely enjoyed good talk. Let it be observed that I say good talk, and not a good talk. Dr. Johnson never could have said "Sir, we had a good talk." Nobody spoke in that manner in the eighteenth century. What he said was "Sir, we had good talk," though Robert Louis Stevenson could not be made to understand the distinction. Well, the talk at this editor's house was extraordinarily good. Generally speaking, I have found the most pleasant conversation to be dialogue, but our host had a personality so vivid and sympathetic that he brought everybody in. No doubt he selected. He liked young men best, and he chose companions who had common interests. So it turned out inevitably that the talk was shoppy, but I like shoppy talk provided it is *my* shop, as in this case it happened to be. On a summer day we would gather in the garden, and you might then hear the news you were most interested in, along with plenty of brilliant but not ill-natured comment. Our host was very particular to exclude bitterness and scandal. He was equally scrupulous in his abhorrence of flattery. That detestable individual, the Second Fiddle, was never allowed to play in his presence. It is long ago now, but it was a great honour and privilege for me to have some share of the talk in those days, and I sometimes stop at the gate and look through and see the little lawn peopled by kind ghosts.

There is another home which I call the House of

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Perfect Hospitality. How can you explain the secret of making a house pleasant to every one who enters, or perhaps I should say to every one with the smallest right to enter? The Human Mosquito has no right to enter any house. You may find out by scientific observations whether you are likely to meet him, and shun the place as you would shun a plague. Do you not know the human mosquito; the man who is always rubbing you in the wrong way, who persists in reminding you of things you would give a year of your life to forget, who knows exactly where your sore places are and makes for them? I never met him at this house, but that is not the whole story. There are hosts and hostesses who have the gift of selecting pleasant guests, but their guests do not show at their finest when they have been secured. Perhaps the secret is a woman's kindness and a woman's tact. The true test of a lady is her quality as a hostess. When the guest feels that he is welcome, that he is considered, that he is in the fullest sense of the phrase at home, one may be sure that a very friendly, a very observant, and a very thoughtful mind has been at work. Tennyson's welcome to Maurice is a very pretty thing, especially pretty when it is turned into Latin, and, as everybody knows the English, I may give a few lines of the translation—

*“Non mordax aderit lingua cubantibus
Sed sermo modicus vinaque mollia,
Dum te pica loquax murmure garrulo
Mulcet sub trabe pineâ.”*

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A plain little villa I call the House of the Successful Children. The father and mother are most respectable, but not, so far as one can see, in any way extraordinary. But their children have triumphed marvellously in various fields of life. They have been careful, industrious, loyal, and they have swept the prizes. We all talk about them, and we all wonder. How is this accounted for? Clever people are often blessed with stupid sons. Parents who have done their very best to train their children have sometimes the unspeakable misery of seeing them go wrong. Every now and then, however, you hear of boys coming out and distinguishing themselves in every worthy way. You cannot account for their talent. It does not appear to be hereditary, but there is the fact, and the homely, sensible fathers and mothers are glorified in their offspring. I cannot explain it, but George Eliot says somewhere that a mother's love is at first merely an expansion of the animal existence. At the beginning it merely extends the range of self. But in after years it can only continue to be a joy on the same terms as other long-lived love—that is, by much suppression of self and much patience. Perhaps it is because the parents, commonplace though they seem, have the wisdom to make the training of their children their supreme care. Under a homely guise great qualities may be hidden, and the children find them out. Perhaps, also, it is good for children that they should be brought in contact from the very beginning with

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the stern realities of life, that they should know what it costs their parents to make the path clear for them, and that they should thus be filled with the eager desire not to be unworthy of their goodness.

Then there is the House of the Absent, inhabited by a lady and her two children. We thought for a long time that she was a widow. She is very cheerful and very good, and regards her girls with an obvious and delightful fondness and pride. But the truth is that her husband is incurably insane. She visits him every week in the asylum, and has done so for some five years past. Her chief trouble is that he has forgotten her children, and does not always recognise her. The family rarely mention him. They seem to feel a kind of shame because he is mad. Yet they are such bright, cheerful people that you hardly ever come under his shadow in the house, though you are startled now and then to find how much he is with them. The youngest child, who is about ten years old, was playing once in my house with other children. They started the game of wishing, and the older people tried to guess what the children had been coveting. This child, feeling, I think, that it was not polite to leave me in the dark, said she did not mind telling me, as she had wished the same thing ever so many times, and it never came true. I accepted the confidence thoughtlessly, making a joke of it, and the poor girl told me, with a little awkward shyness, but quite unaffectedly and

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without show of emotion, "I wished my father might get better."

One of the most delightful places I visit is the House of the Man with Many Friends. As a rule men who have many friends have no friends, but in this case the friendships have lasted over a long lifetime, and many of them are temporarily severed by death. So there is no infidelity. There is only the opening of the heart to take one in when another goes. My friend is now beginning to be an old man, and he has had a rarely fortunate experience. From the very beginning of his career he has been thrown into contact with the cleverest men in London. If he has a fault it is that he is too much intolerant of dulness. He belongs heart and soul to that society which admits a man if he can talk well and brightly and is a decent fellow, but will admit no one else, however much money and however many titles he may possess. My friend began with Leigh Hunt and his circle, knew John Leech intimately, was acquainted with Dickens and Thackeray, and has gone on cultivating the fellowship of their successors, such as they are, and many other people. He is a repository of traditions about the old literary Bohemia, and he is as keenly interested in the new as in the old. He can enrich his conversation with sudden and delightful memories and parallels from the past in a way which is quite unique, so far as I know. Personally, I am not skilled in conversation, but pride myself on a certain knack in asking questions.

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In this way much has come to me, and many things that were not asked for. You might not care for them, but I take pleasure in thinking that John Leech, when he died, left behind him forty pairs of trousers and forty-six pots of cayenne pepper. I like to know that Professor Cowell bought one boot at a time, and that an elastic-sided boot. When the past is recalled and the dead are spoken of, it should be in a spirit of kindly tenderness and charity, and such is the happy atmosphere of the House of the Man with Many Friends.

And then there is the House of the Lost Child, whom I last saw with a crimson flower burning on her breast.

CHAPTER XVI

POTATOES *OR* CABBAGE?

MARK RUTHERFORD tells us that when he was a Unitarian minister he dined once after a sermon with an elderly gentleman and his wife. "They might both be about sixty-five, and were of about the same temperament, pale, thin, and ineffectual, as if they had been fed on gruel. We had dinner in a large room with an old-fashioned grate in it, in which was stuck a basket stove. I remember perfectly well what we had for dinner. There was a neck of mutton (cold), potatoes, cabbage, a suet pudding, and some of the strangest-looking ale I ever saw—about the colour of lemon juice; but what it was really like I do not know, as I do not drink beer. I was somewhat surprised at being asked whether I would take potatoes *or* cabbage, but thinking it was the custom of the country not to indulge in both at once, and remembering that I was on probation, I said cabbage." My point to-day is that we are all too apt to follow Mark Rutherford's example, and to say cabbage, or, if not, to say potatoes, whether we might have cabbage and potatoes, we acquiesce in the "or," and are foolishly content with one or the other.

I admit at once that there are real alternatives in

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life. Forcible and homely expressions of this truth are at everybody's hand. You cannot eat your cake and have it, is a vulgar way of saying that the palm is not to be obtained without the dust. It is part of the wisdom of life to learn that we must concentrate. It is given to no one to be great at everything. One eminent writer tells us that it is hardly possible for one person to be perfectly master of two languages. To attain the first rank in any pursuit, be it a business, or a study, or a game, one must forego pre-eminence or even eminence in other pursuits. With all our striving the limits of life remain, and are not to be removed. What is true of the individual is true of the nation. A people that goes mad on sport is a people that cannot hope to retain the lead when other nations become earnest.

I know also that we must mournfully and constantly acquiesce in exclusions that seem to have no ground in nature or in necessity. We have to choose many times between potatoes and cabbage. It seems as if the inhospitable universe might have bidden us welcome to both. A man and a maid come together in the freshness of life and commence the struggle hand in hand. The battle is hard, but the opposing forces give way at last, and the little summit on which both hearts were set is attained. And then? Why, then one is removed, one who had done her part and more to gain the victory, but is not left to enjoy it. And because she is gone it is no victory for the other. He would rather a thousand times be

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at the bottom of the hill again with her hand in his. Or a man sets his soul on winning the prizes of life for his son. All his heart is wrapped up in the boy. He has no ambitions except for the lad's success. What comes to him in the way of triumph is dear just for the son's sake. As it happens he takes the prizes. After a certain time the honours come easily. Then the son dies, and life is turned into an empty mockery, without meaning, without savour. Why should such things be? We cannot answer one of a thousand. We do not see why in each case the dream should not have embodied itself in reality. It would have been nothing wonderful, for all the street is full of living people, and one thinks that many of them could have been more easily spared. But all that is left us is to bow our heads and acquiesce as best we may. No lesson is so burnt in upon the observer of human life as that of the nothingness of splendour and the iron reality of suffering.

Still the fact remains that much of our life is in our own hands, and that we acquiesce much too lazily in exclusions that were not needful. For "or" we might many times read "and." If we did our lives would be a great deal more happy, and a great deal more useful. I will put down roughly a few illustrations, mostly from facts that are fresh in my memory. Let me begin by saying that is no reason why charm of manner should not be added to any gift, physical or intellectual. This is the way to make room for the gift. All through life,

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and especially at first, we have to confront resistance. It is wise to choose the line of least resistance if it is in the way to our goal. It is courtesy above everything that will make way for us, that will win recognition for a gift, and a place for its possessor. Why should clever men be so deficient, as they often are, in manner? Some are inveterate *poseurs*, and if there be anything more sickening than pose I do not know it. Others are what is termed brusque, which invariably describes rudeness and insolence. I might go through the catalogue, but it is not needful. Gracious manners are always acceptable, even in the humblest. When a man of great name and genius, or a woman of great beauty possesses them, they lead captives at their will. There is nothing which wise guardians will more carefully attend to in the education of the young than their training in good manners. Who can tell how much the notorious lack of good manners in the British people has done to win for them the hatred of the world?

Why should we say capable or honest? Why should not a man be both honest and capable? A friend of mine advertised lately for a man to take up a difficult but very promising and profitable line of business. The qualifications required were somewhat unusual, and I must not indicate them. He did not expect many answers to his advertisement, but he chose his medium well, and had seventeen. I think it is quite possible that the majority of those who were fit for the work and willing to undertake it applied.

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At his request I examined the testimonials, and one candidate stood very far above the rest; in fact, the testimonials to his capacity were of a very striking kind, and his own letters proved him to be a man of rare intelligence and foresight. The puzzle was that such a man should be content with such a salary as was offered, though it was not a small salary, and there were good prospects of an increase. But why was he not in a better position? We made some private inquiries, and at last came upon his track. He was all, and perhaps more than all, his certificates said in point of ability, but he had shown himself at one great crisis of his life to be utterly untrustworthy. Every effort had been made to give him a fresh chance, but it was too late. My friend groaned and said, Why should it not be possible to find a man who is both honest and capable? The other applicants had good characters, but there was no indication in them of the exceptional capacity which the situation required.

Pursuing a similar line, why should not a man be both brilliant and industrious? To be very bright, very clever, very quick gives a man a great advantage in life. To begin with, these qualities show themselves at first sight and on every occasion. Most people and many of the best show but poorly till you know them. They cannot readily reveal their gift. Among strangers they are stupid and awkward. It is only in time that the perception of their excellence dawns upon you. But the brilliant man is

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master everywhere, and master at once. Now if he combined with his brilliancy the patience, the rigour, the self-discipline necessary for the best use of his powers, there is nothing he might not accomplish. How rarely does one find it does! The man calculates upon his speed. He allows himself indulgences and holidays because he can so well make up for lost time. So the old story is enacted, and the hare is caught up by the tortoise. "It is his misfortune," said a wise man to me, "that he is very clever. He always presumes upon his cleverness, and therefore never does himself justice, and in the end does no more than might be done by a stupid person who is diligent."

If a man has good thoughts, is there any reason why he should not learn how to express them? Style is the medium through which thoughts can reach the dull ear of the world. Yet how many able men reduce their influence to nothing simply because they will not master the instrument of expression. I know one of very brilliant and subtle mind, and of great accomplishment, a man who has the ambition of leadership, and perhaps has the power to lead. But he cannot write. He writes in such a way that he loses half his readers at the end of the first paragraph, and nearly another half at the end of the second paragraph. His style has almost every kind of vice that can belong to style. In addition, he has the great moral defect of not perceiving and keeping in view what may be said by his opponents. Whether

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a man is answering opponents or not, he ought always to have his eye upon them, to be considering what they might say in answer to what he is saying. The consequence is that though I generally agree with him, he exasperates me so much by his method of argumentation that at the end of his articles I wish I were on the other side. How often has one heard a preacher of excellent elocutionary gifts who had simply nothing to say, or a preacher full of thoughts, but with every possible awkwardness of manner and expression! Why should these things be?

“She has beautiful hair,” said a very plain-spoken old Englishman, “but I think of the head beneath the hair.” Why should he not think about both? There is no reason why a pretty woman should be uncultivated and stupid. There is no reason why a learned woman should be untidy and frowsy. Beauty and accomplishment were meant to go together, and yet if all stories are true, many women presume upon their youth and beauty, and neglect the mind, while others who are careful of the mind are so contemptuous of the personal graces that they discourage and prejudice and retard the reasonable advance of womanhood. I am happy to think that this is becoming a thing of the past. If one reads the history of the French Salons, one sees that the power and charm of womanhood are independent of years. It was said of Madame De Sablé, as of some other remarkable Frenchwomen, that the part of her life

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which was richest in interest and results was that which was looked forward to by most of her sex with melancholy as the period of decline. When between fifty and sixty she had philosophers, wits, beauties, and saints clustering round her. What was the elixir which gave her this enduring and general attraction? No doubt the well-balanced development of her mental powers. This gave her a comprehension of varied intellectual processes, and a tolerance for varied forms of character which is even rarer in woman than in man. We have all known examples of this. We have seen how wit keeps beauty alive, and how powerless the spell of beauty soon becomes when there is neither character nor intellectual force behind it.

One thing more. It is the combination of qualities rather than their singularity which gives attraction and influence. One and one in this region do not make two; they make five. Respectable gifts used with ceaseless industry will do far more to make life efficient and happy than brilliant gifts where there is no industry. From one point of view it is our duty to make up our minds for necessary exclusions. That is one great part of the wisdom of life, but a part no less great, though often sadly forgotten, is to determine against the unnecessary exclusion, to affirm our right to potatoes *and* cabbage.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAN WITH A COLD

EVERYBODY has a cold at times, and makes more or less fuss about it, but there are unfortunate beings with whom the intervals between colds contract until they hardly count. The unfortunate individual who belongs to this family may be called the Man with a Cold. His association with a cold is his main characteristic, the principal and nearly permanent fact of his existence.

His lot is hard, for in the first place he cannot speak of his trouble, or if he does speak, he is refused a hearing. His fellow-creatures, even the nearest and dearest, let him know at last that they will have no more of it. This is a peculiar affliction, and strikes against all that is reasonable, for, truly apprehended, there is nothing so enthralling as the Romance of a Cold. To write this romance, or to tell it—to go from the root of the matter to the end of it—to trace in all its picturesque and moving detail the origin, progress, and issues of a cold, is one of the highest and noblest employments of the human faculties. But, as I have said, people will not stand it. They will endure much boredom, but not that.

The Man with a Cold, always so full of his subject,

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is compelled to be silent on it. I have before me a very sentimental essay on Sentimentalism, from which I will quote a passage, acknowledging that I have taken some liberty with the writer's words: "It is true that we have all much in common; but what we have most in common is this—that we are all isolated. Man is more than a combination of passions common to his kind. Beyond them and behind them an inner life, whose current we know we have within us, flows on in solitary stillness. It lies deep beneath all flashes on the surface. Just as the fancy of men in dreams traverses earth and heaven, he cannot get away from one weary weight—the presence of a cold, of a centre round which all revolves—so is the solitude of a cold the only tangible idea we can assign to it. Habits change, convictions alter, even tastes die away, but the cold, by a mysterious exercise of its vitality, moves on from phase to phase, from gloom to sunshine, from activity to repose."

But it is only the proprietor of a cold who fully appreciates its romantic quality. A cold does manifest itself to unsympathetic outsiders, but it must be owned that the manifestation takes a very prosaic form. The voice becomes hoarse and uncertain. It is even as the voice of Mr. Raddle, which, when it reached Mr. Sawyer's party, appeared to proceed from beneath distant bedclothes. I knew a preacher labouring under a tremendous cold, who managed in some fashion to deliver a discourse in Edinburgh. At the close an apparently sympathetic elder pre-

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sented himself, and the following conversation took place:

Elder: "This is most trying, most trying."

Preacher (endeavouring to be cheerful): "Oh, not so bad as all that. I do not feel any the worse for it."

Elder (severely): "I meant most trying for the listeners."

Coughing cannot be described as an agreeable sound; it is particularly irritating when two people in the same house have colds at the same time, and cough in responses, "hoasts encountering hoasts," as the "Scottish Probationer" would put it. Then you understand the meaning of the observant moralist who declared that the only faults which could not be forgiven were those which could not be helped. Sneezing and blowing the nose are exercises which by no stretch of fancy can be described as poetical, and the same may be said of mufflers and red flannel. Nowadays, people are so scared about their health, and so apprehensive of infection, that the Man with a Cold may expect, if he lives long enough, to be shut up in a solitary cell.

Perhaps, however, the chief grievance of the Man with a Cold is against his doctors. They will not trouble themselves about a cold. If they are sent for they treat it with contempt. The Man with a Cold has nothing to say against the gallant and noble efforts made by physicians to find the means of combating the graver diseases. But he cannot help

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thinking that some doctors might devote themselves to grappling with troubles that are considered unimportant. I venture to say that the doctor who could cut short a cold would make a royal income, and earn the most sincere gratitude. As it is, the Man with the Cold knows exactly how things are going to be. It bursts upon him suddenly that he has caught a cold, and the whole programme of the next three or four weeks unfolds itself: the various stages, the steady progression from head to the throat, and from the throat to the lung, the ineffectual and disagreeable mixtures, the dulling of every energy and faculty, the great weight added on to the load of life. It must all be gone through, and physicians, as Captain Bunsby observed, are in vain.

But there is more to say, and here it is going to be said almost for the first time. The Man with a Cold in this country and this century is compelled to be silent on his very deepest convictions. He is the victim of a persecution in which all sects and all parties join. Dr. Clifford and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. Lloyd-George and Mr. J. G. Talbot, Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Asquith, Mr. Walkley and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, will all unite as one man to crush him if he dares to speak. The Man with a Cold has to keep his secret well, and to fare on in a desperate silence when he is all on fire to declare himself. He knows very well that colds, neuralgia, and most of the ills that invest him, arise from the great modern curse of Fresh Air. The other day my friend

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Dagonet threw out a dark hint, but even his courage will not suffice for the revealing of the truth. What is to happen to the Man with a Cold if he says frankly that he objects to open windows. Nowadays all accept the saying that you should sit with open windows, and sleep with open windows, and travel in railway carriages with open windows. Ventilation is universally popular with the British people. Churches must be ventilated, halls must be ventilated, private dwelling must be ventilated. The late Mr. Spurgeon used to boast that when he was a young minister he broke a window in his chapel to let in fresh air. His deacons, who no doubt were men with colds, had strongly objected to ventilation, but Mr. Spurgeon had his way, and as time went on everybody agreed with him. Nowadays people with colds, even those whose colds have passed into pleurisy, pneumonia, and consumption, are told that the cure is in fresh air, that they should be out in the open as much as possible. So much is this idea being pressed, that institutions are built for the treatment, and I should not be surprised if at last we are told that it is best to live night and day in the open air. This would mean the abolition of dwelling-houses and of rent, and of mankind. Now the Man with a Cold thinks he knows very well that fresh air is the enemy. He has tried it—compelled to do so against his own convictions by dominating domestic influences. He has slept with the windows open while he had a cold, and the cold has developed into pleurisy or some-

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thing else. The development, indeed, has promised a very complete cure, a full cure for all ills, too complete, however, for his taste. He knows exactly what happens on a railway journey in the winter-time. Some one in the carriage says with a smile of winning sweetness, " You do not object to one window open? " The Man with a Cold ruefully assents. He objects with all his heart and soul, but what is the use? Sometimes his companion graciously adds: " If we had two windows open there might be a draught, but one window can do no harm." The Man with a Cold thinks that one window does the mischief effectually. Sometimes, and perhaps oftener now than ever, both windows are taken down, and a sharp current does its deadly work. It does not matter very much, perhaps, whether one window is open or two. If the Man with a Cold had his will he would close all windows for ever; he would construct windows in the manner of the intelligent ancients, so that by no possibility could they ever be opened.

This suppression of honest opinion, thinks the Man with a Cold, is fatal to the true interests of the country. There has been a great clamour about declining trade, and about the competition of foreign nations, especially of the United States. Innumerable speeches have been delivered on the subject, and will yet be delivered. There are those who preach the nostrum of Protection. There are others who preach the nostrum of Free Trade. The Man with a Cold is not a Protectionist. He knows better than

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that. Nor does he consider that Free Trade will amend our ills. The country may remain a Free Trade country and be beaten by foreign nations. What is the true cure? The Man with a Cold knows. He has travelled on the Continent and in America. He is fully prepared to believe that the Continent is ahead of us in enterprise and vitality, and especially prepared to hear that the Americans are beating us on every hand, for on the Continent, although in his judgment things are getting worse, there still lingers a wholesome dislike of open windows and fresh air. When the Man with a Cold first visited the Continent few windows opened. Now the English have brought in their notions, and there is some change. Still, especially in railway carriages, it is not as it is in England. In a long Continental journey the Man with a Cold generally finds his fellow-passengers, if they are not Englishmen, as much afraid of the open window as he is himself. It is, however, in the United States that the Man with a Cold is truly happy. He is happy everywhere: in hotels, in private houses, in churches, in public halls. But he is supremely blessed in railway carriages. Everywhere there are great draughts of hot, stuffy, reviving air. But especially in the railway carriages is the sentiment of the great American people clear and noble. Not even a John Bull could induce them to allow a window to be opened. It positively adds to his pleasure that he has English companions who profess themselves sorely discomfited and complain of headaches. All

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along, right from New York to New Orleans, he can travel without a breath of fresh air. In these circumstances his spirits rise, he recalls all his anecdotes and tells them with infinite zest ; he is ready with his repartees, he radiates benevolence from every feature. These are his high days of revel and luxury. He is fortified against all dangers and equal to any exertion. His voice is loud, and clear, and sweet. He wishes this might go on for ever ; like the gentleman in Browning's poem (modified slightly), he would "ride for ever, for ever ride." There is no sign that the American people have modified their view on these subjects, and so long as they hold to them the Man with a Cold knows that their influence must become more and more paramount. He reads about ten per cent. tariffs, and a hundred per cent. tariffs, and retaliatory tariffs, but these things do not touch him. If fresh air could be kept out he is convinced that imports and exports would come all right. What is wrong is that so many of our people are working at half their power, depressed by neuralgia and colds. If this could be prevented, then the energy of the American people would be transferred to this island, and we should go clear ahead.

For these and for other reasons the life of the Man with a Cold is on the whole subdued. He has no compensations to speak of. After a time he becomes resigned, and he may even get to see the comic side of the business. He watches for the dwindling intervals that separate his cold. These are more and

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more enjoyable, but blessings brighten as they take their flight. He has no hope of reversing the strong current of popular opinion. Not until the nation has come to sleeping in the open air through February or March, not until the population has been reduced by one-half, will there be any real improvement.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DUAL LIFE: CHARLOTTE BRONTË,
GEORGE ELIOT, AND JANE AUSTEN

ALL of us live two lives, the life of reality and the life of imagination. This may make either for happiness or for misery. If we are at peace in the life of reality notwithstanding whatever mars and hampers it, we may revel in the dreams of what may come in a fuller existence. But if the real life has brought us little but pain, if our circumstances and our toils are merely irksome and humiliating, if we have missed sufficing love and friendship, then there is a schism which may embitter and wear out the spirit in those who are weak, and sadden it even in the strongest. Rousseau's reflections are worth quoting. "The recollection of the different periods of my life led me to reflect upon the point which I had reached, and I saw myself already in my declining years a prey to painful evils, and believed that I was approaching the end of my career without having enjoyed in its fullness scarcely one single pleasure of those for which my heart yearned, without having given scope to the lively feelings which I felt it had in reserve, without having tested or even sipped that intoxicating pleasure which I felt was in my soul in all its force, and which for want of an object always found itself kept

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in check and unable to give itself vent in any other way but through my sighs. How came it to pass that I, a man of naturally expansive soul, for whom to live was to love, had never been able to find a friend entirely devoted to myself, a true friend—I who felt admirably adapted to be one myself? How came it to pass that with feelings so easily set on fire, with a heart so full of affection, I had never once been inflamed with the love of a definite object? Consumed by the desire of loving without ever having been able to stifle it completely, I saw myself approaching the portals of old age and dying without having loved. . . . It seemed to me that destiny owed me something which it had not yet granted me. Why had I been born with delicate faculties if they were to remain unemployed to the end?”

It is very hard to know the real life of a human being, and much more difficult to understand their life in dreams. Many keep their secret because they will not, and many because they cannot, reveal it. But perhaps something may be said of the three great women novelists, Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Jane Austen. Whatever may be said about the capacities of women, it cannot be denied that in fiction they have attained their highest distinction, and it is hard to believe that a woman can write a novel without showing something of her own heart.

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I

Of Charlotte Brontë we know as much as of any other. Her life has been studied with such minuteness of investigation that almost every line of her most secret and intimate letters has been recovered. She wrote in her books with a passion and a freedom hardly to be paralleled. But in her case the life of reality and the life of imagination were in sharp and bitter contrast. She herself was born to the poverty and conventionality of a Yorkshire vicarage. There was indeed much that was unconventional in her surroundings, and her father retained his strong Irish individuality through all repression. But for all that, Charlotte Brontë had her narrow sphere to fill, and was oppressed by its limitations. It is not too much to say that she loathed and despised most of the people she encountered. For the bigoted evangelical parsons, beginning with Carus-Wilson and going on to the curates in *Shirley*, she had hardly even a touch of relenting. The purse-proud, vulgar, hard manufacturing magnates who employed her as a governess were equally detested and scorned. She was the truest of sisters, and her sisters were worthy of her love. But her brother trampled out the last spark of love in her heart before he died. She was devoted to her father, but was never under any illusions about him. Such possible lovers as offered were impossible, and though Charlotte Brontë was too wise to contemn affection, and prized her friendships with

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good women, she found none amongst them all to whom she could speak her heart. Once, and once only, in her youth her dream turned near reality. She found in her Brussels teacher, not a man whom she fell in love with, but a man whom she might have loved. But though her heart was hot with the dream, she came back to the stifling cares and burdens of Haworth, and in all points anxiously fulfilled her duty as a clergyman's daughter. Shy, demure, reserved, punctilious—all this she was to her neighbours, and nothing beyond.

But when we read her books, we see that her dream life was utterly different. Her heroines are all of them, to use Rousseau's phrase, "children of Melchizedek." They are orphans, free to take their own course, free to work and to find, if it may be, the glory of love. When love comes they have no tyrannical relatives to consult: the world has no claims upon them. For Charlotte Brontë the ideal life was that of a man and woman who chose each other from all the world, and were sufficient to one another, fearing no man's frown, asking no man's favour. She did not despise the adornments of existence, but the heart of life was love. When we consider the chains which held her fast to duty, through her darkened and anxious years, with the perfect freedom which she allows to the children of her imagination, we cannot but feel that in many ways Charlotte Brontë's life was a true tragedy. No one was ever more faithful in outward compliance than she, but her heart

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was wrapped in flames, though she never suffered herself to say outright with Turgenieff's hero, "I should rebel . . . and I rebel, I rebel."

II

In George Eliot it is impossible not to see the same laceration, but there is a striking contrast in the attitude of the two women to the regulated order of life. Charlotte Brontë was no rebel against the higher morality, and she revered religion as she conceived it. For the morality and religion of many whose company she was obliged to endure, she had less than no regard. But George Eliot broke away from her early faith, and violated with deliberation the chief law of society. The circumstances of her prolonged alliance with G. H. Lewes have never been fully disclosed, and the reticence is justifiable. Suffice it to say that about the middle of last century there was a great outbreak of George Sandism in English society, and particularly in English literary society. It went much further than any printed record tells us, though very significant hints may be found here and there, particularly in the letters of the Carlyles. There are those still living who can speak of its results. George Eliot happened to be the most conspicuous offender, but she was by no means the greatest. In the record of her life it seems as if she had discarded the old faith and practice with hardly a struggle. It has been said that

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she shed her belief in Christianity as a rose-tree sheds its flowers, and that there is not the faintest sign of a moral pang in parting either with religious creed or with moral instinct. Her union with Lewes she justified to the end.

But when we turn to her books, with their noble ethical spirit, we find them one long condemnation of her own practice. It is little to say that she holds up the sanctity of marriage to the respect of the world. It is not enough even to say what is true, that she represents marriage as of sacramental significance. What is even more striking is her mercilessness to transgressors. They are pursued and overcome by avenging furies, and she watches their agonies without a tear of pity. The cruellest thing ever written of a woman by a woman is the coarse and revolting episode of Mrs. Transome in *Felix Holt*. It is an indelible blot on George Eliot's work and reputation, and the punishment of Mrs. Transome by the hands of her own son is worthy of a remorseless fiend, though it was inflicted by an erring woman. The more one reads George Eliot's books the more they seem to be an expiation for her own fault.

Was she happy, then? Assuredly not. She had compensations, but the general impression of her life and letters is profoundly melancholy. She did not, I think, part with her early faith so absolutely and so easily as is generally thought. Very few do part with the beliefs in which they were nourished, however they may modify their expression, and however far

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behind they may leave them in practice. The conscience of her youth tortured her, and made her tremble. She was never made for defiance. She was born to be a moralist, a Mrs. Grundy of a very noble type, advising and warning passionate youth with an uplifted finger: "Now, my dear." Her books show that she was profoundly convinced that no woman who violated the law of honour could ever escape the consequences. What is more puzzling is that she has very little pity, if indeed she has any pity, for any woman who is the victim of her weakness. The story of Hetty is not so cruel as the story of Mrs. Transome, but it is cruel. We are made so to feel the emptiness, the worthlessness, the senselessness of Hetty, that her fall affects us scarcely more than the fall of a mantelpiece ornament.

III

In Jane Austen we seem to have a life as quiet, as calm, as delicate and unobtrusive as the life of her books. That life is very tranquil, uninvaded by the hurry, the crowding interests, and the aggressiveness of the outer world. It gives, as has been said, a great sense of perfect seclusion, ample opportunity, plenty of space, and plenty of time. The immortal Mr. Collins excuses himself for not singing: " ' If I,' said Mr. Collins, ' were so fortunate as to be able to sing, I should have great pleasure in obliging the company with an air; for I consider

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music as a very innocent diversion, and perfectly compatible with the profession of a clergyman. I do not mean, however, to assert that we can be justified in devoting too much of our time to music, for there are certainly other things to be attended to. The rector of a parish has much to do. In the first place, he must make such an agreement for tithes as may be beneficial to himself and not offensive to his patron. He must write his own sermons, and the time that remains will not be too much for his parish duties, and the care and improvement of his dwelling, which he cannot be excused from making as comfortable as possible. And I do not think it of light importance that he should have attentive and conciliatory manners towards everybody, especially towards those to whom he owes his preferment. I cannot acquit him of that duty; nor could I think well of the man who should omit an occasion of testifying his respect towards anybody connected with the family.' And with a bow to Mr. Darcy he concluded his speech, which had been spoken so loud as to be heard by half the room." London, which has long been the great nerve-knot of this country, does not play an important part in Miss Austen's books, and in *Emma*, which is perhaps the best of them, it is hardly mentioned at all. Everybody seems to be within a drive. Tragedy scarcely enters the sequestered life. There is time for the sedate flowering of every quality. Death is almost completely excluded. I can remember in the whole range of Miss Austen's fiction but one

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death, and that takes place off the stage. George Eliot's novels show a profound sense of the movement of life towards death; nor does she shrink always from the deathbed scenes which has been so much too common in recent fiction. Even into Miss Austen's quiet and self-centred country death made his entrance, and she had her share of mortal sorrow, but the English gentlewoman of those days did not reveal her heart. Miss Austen's first novel is described on the title-page as "By a Lady," and the phrase might be used of every line she penned. But the showy, the glaring, the sentimental, the effusive, she shrank from instinctively. She went no further than unobtrusive irony and delicate banter. She was happy, for the life was in many respects sheltered and restful, and her sense of humour prevented her suffering from fools even as much as her companions did. Her mother tells us that while Lady Saye and Sele was wearisome to her, Jane Austen found her most amusing.

But one is not sorry to know that Jane Austen could feel, and feel very deeply. In Miss Constance Hill's admirable book on *Jane Austen, Her Homes and Her Friends*, there is a most interesting account of a love episode which seems to have occurred when Jane Austen was twenty-three. She met in Devonshire a clergyman named Blackall, and the result was a deep attachment. He died soon afterwards. This happened about 1799, and though Jane Austen said nothing, she ceased to write. "Between her first

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novels and their successors, there was a period of twelve years, a long, strange silence, for which there must surely have been some reason. Is it not probable that, lively and cheerful as she was in manner, she had that deep, silent sorrow at her heart, which could not but indispose her to the exercise of writing, perhaps even paralysed the faculty of invention." Jane Austen is not the less dear for this silence, and the happiest thing is that her last books, which are the brightest and sunniest of all, prove that she was victorious over her trouble, that it enriched and mellowed her sweet, faithful nature. Once, at least, she let her heart slip into her pen, when she said as Anne Elliot, "All the privilege I claim for my sex, and it is not a very enviable one, is that of loving longest when hope is gone."

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE WORLD OF JANE AUSTEN

I HAVE occupied myself very pleasantly in recent hours of leisure by reading over for a purpose Jane Austen's novels in the two delightful India paper volumes published by Messrs. Nelson. My purpose was to comprehend the world Jane Austen described, which was the world she moved in.

Of peculiarities in her style there are very few. The most remarkable, perhaps, is her use of the word "chief," particularly in *Pride and Prejudice*. I have traced only one or two examples in her other books. She speaks of Elizabeth Bennet "passing the chief of the night in her sister's room." Again: "The chief of every day was spent by him at Lucas Lodge." Again: "Mrs. Gardiner, to whom the chief of the news had been given before." Again: "The chief of the time between breakfast and dinner was now passed by him either at work in the garden or in reading and writing." There are other instances, but these will suffice. However, that is not my point. I make notes on Jane Austen's views on matrimony, on income, and on reading.

I

The place occupied by matrimony and matchmaking in the minds and lives of her people is astounding.

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It is fair to say that she is describing the manners of her period, and that in her best female characters, Elizabeth Bennet and Anne Elliot, she gives us examples of sweet and dignified womanhood. But on the whole, marriage is the prime interest on almost every one of her pages. When the curtain rises at the beginning of her novels, we are introduced immediately to marriageable ladies and single men of good fortune who may be induced to choose them. Mothers are exceedingly solicitous, and all take part in the game—fathers, aunts, and sisters. Of Mrs. Bennet we are told that the marriage of her daughter had been the first object of her wishes since Jane was sixteen.

The young ladies themselves, are, as a rule, quite candid on the subject. Thus of Charlotte Lucas we are told that without thinking highly either of men or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object. "It was the only honourable profession for well-educated women of small fortune, and however uncertain all coming happiness must be, their pleasantest preservative from want." Maria Bertram in *Mansfield Park* has a matchmaker in her aunt Mrs. Norris. "It would be peculiarly consoling to see their dear Maria settled, she very often thought—always when they were in the company of men of fortune, and particularly on the introduction of a young man who had recently succeeded to one of the best estates and finest places in the country." Mary Crawford, who is by no means "odious," had not

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been three hours in the house before she told what she had planned. "Matrimony was her object, provided she could marry well." Even Marianne Dashwoods says much the same thing. The openness with which matrimonial disappointments are discussed is amazing.

When Mr. Collins is refused by Elizabeth Bennet, it seems as if everything went on in public. There is no sort of reticence. As soon as he is refused, Mrs. Bennet undertakes to bring her to reason. "I will go directly to Mr. Bennet, and we shall very soon settle that with him, I am sure. Accordingly she called out to Mr. Bennet: 'You must come and make Lizzie marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him.'" Lizzie is summoned to the library, but Mr. Bennet refuses to be firm. The sisters are then called in, and while the family is confused, Charlotte Lucas comes to spend the day with them, and is told the news. Mr. Collins keeps on staying in the house for a day or two in a state of angry pride, while another of the daughters thinks that she may marry him. The young ladies make very little concealment of their feelings when men will not propose. Emma is an exception at first, that is, she does not think of marrying herself, but she is fully engrossed in trying to marry her friends, and in this way comes to discover her own feelings. Only a very few, and these the best, of Jane Austen's heroines are reserved to the point of self-respect.

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It is painfully evident that to the women of these times there was no career save marriage, although the old maid in good circumstances might be respectable and respected. True, penniless young ladies might become governesses as Jane Fairfax did, but Jane describes the profession of a governess with nothing short of horror. She says: "I was not thinking of the slave trade—governess trade was all I had in view—widely different certainly as to the guilt of those who carry it on, but as to the greater misery of the victims I do not know where it lies." Emma, while busy with the affairs of others, maintains that she could endure the lot of an old maid. But she was rich. "A single woman with a very narrow income must be a ridiculous, disagreeable old maid." It is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public. We have in *Emma* the portrait of an estimable but ridiculous old maid, Miss Bates, described by the unregenerate Emma as "so silly, so smiling, so prosy, so undistinguished, and so fastidious." Jane Austen has never drawn a really sweet, noble, and stately old maid.

Women in Jane Austin's world had to begin early if they were to secure husbands. Seventeen seems to have been thought a reasonable age for marriage, though perhaps twenty-one was the best age. Conditions became very serious at twenty-seven. It was at that time that Charlotte Lucas was engaged. She

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felt all the good luck of it. Marianne Dashwood declared that a woman of twenty-seven could never hope to feel or inspire affection again. The sweet Anne Elliot married at twenty-seven, but we are told that there was an interval before that age when her physical charm was dimmed. In the case of Elizabeth Elliot, it allowed that it sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she was ten years before. In fact, if there has been neither ill-health nor anxiety, it is a time of life at which no charm need be lost. Still Elizabeth felt the near approach of the years of danger, and she had good reasons for her apprehension. After thirty it seems as if hope is past. Jane Austen has indeed very little mercy for old age, and it is no great concession to say that "a large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction as the most graceful set of limbs in the world."

II

Miss Austen has much to say on the incomes of her characters, more perhaps than any other English novelist, with the possible exception of Trollope. Balzac exceeded her in minuteness. Scott, so far as I can remember, has only once touched the subject. The most revealing touch on this subject that I remember is poor Charlotte Brontë's specification of Shirley's magnificent income. It amounted to no less

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than £1000 a year, a sum which seemed to Miss Brontë, as to Shirley, incalculable riches. Shirley, when she accepted Moore, addressed him thus: "I do not ask you to take off my shoulders all the cares and duties of property, but I ask you to share the burden, and to show me how to sustain my part well." Miss Austen's average woman is very much alive to the importance of a large income. That income is best derived from sound freehold property. The landlord is the gentleman. When Anne Elliot's father escaped to the gaiety of Bath she grieved that he should see nothing to regret in the "duties and dignities of the resident landlord." Elinor Dashwood thinks that grandeur can do little for happiness, but that wealth has much to do with it, and Miss Crawford holds that "a large income is the best recipe for happiness I have ever heard of." When Miss Austen is describing the country society with which she is most familiar, she has little hesitation in fixing the necessary revenue. A country gentleman with £2000 a year of his own and a moderate addition from his wife is well off, but it is better if his fortune should run to £2500; £4000 a year—Mr. Bingley's income—is very good indeed, £10,000 a year, which was the income of Mr. Darcy, is "a noble fortune." The dowries of women are, as a rule, not excessive; in the case of the Dashwood girls only £1000 to each. Miss Maria Ward, of Huntingdon, who married Sir Thomas Bertram, had £7000, and this was considered at least £3000 short of what

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it should have been; £20,000 is a very good fortune for a girl, and £30,000, which was the fortune of Georgiana Darcy, is splendid. In *Emma*, Miss Austen enters a lower region of society. She depicts the life of a country town in Surrey, which was little more than a village. Every one was friendly, and there the apothecary and the business man from London mixed in the best society. But in country society the clergyman is almost the only poor man, save relations, who enters the circle. A clergyman's income is sufficient if it amounts to £700 a year, but it is better when it is £1000. On this a young couple may live respectably; £350 a year is not sufficient. When Mr. Ferrars married Miss Dashwood, "they were neither of them quite enough in love to think that £350 a year would supply them with all the comforts of life." It did not occur to their well-regulated minds that they should marry till these comforts were secured, and a timely addition of £10,000 to their fortune saved the situation. I should add that in these days the Navy seems to have been a lucrative profession, and Wentworth, the husband of Anne Elliot, was reputed to have made £20,000 by the war.

III

I should be tempted to say that the dominant thought in Miss Austen's mind was the supreme importance of reading. What troubled her about her

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characters was their ignorance and their silliness, their idleness and their vanity. She had a most absolute conviction that the wise could not be happy with the foolish, and that even the wise could not maintain the zest of a married life without continually cultivating their minds. Perhaps the classical passage on this subject is in *Mansfield Park*. There Miss Austen ridicules the female education of the day. The two sisters Bertram are talking to Mrs. Norris about the ignorance of their cousin Fanny. "I cannot remember the time when I did not know a great deal that she has not the least notion of, yet how long it is, aunt, since we used to repeat the chronological order of the Kings of England, with the dates of their accession, and most of the principal events of their reign." "Yes," added the other, "and all the Roman Emperors as low as Severus, besides a great deal of the heathen mythology, and of the metals, semi-metals, planets and distinguished philosophers." This education Miss Austen esteemed lightly. When Edmund Bertram took his cousin's mind in hand, "his attentions were otherwise of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind and extending its pleasures. He knew her to be clever, to have a quick apprehension as well as good sense, and a fondness for reading which, properly directed, must be an education in itself. Miss Lee taught her French, and heard her read the daily portion of history, but he recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours,

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He encouraged her taste and corrected her judgment; he made reading useful by talking to her of what she read, and heightened its attraction by judicious praise." Miss Austen's theory of education is to be found in the words, "a fondness for reading, which, properly directed, must be an education in itself." Is there any better theory of education than this? I do not know of one. We find later on that Fanny had been a collector of books from the first hour of her ever commanding a shilling, and among her possessions were Crabbe's *Tales* and the *Idler*. She used to read Shakespeare to her aunt, and the only occasion on which Crawford nearly touched her heart was when he read Shakespeare aloud in a dramatic way. In *Sense and Sensibility* Marianne Dashwood had the knack of finding her way in every house to the library, however it might be avoided by the family in general. When Emma questioned Harriet about her lover, Mr. Martin, the interrogations began thus: "Mr. Martin, I suppose, is not a man of information beyond the line of his own business. He does not read?" It turned out that Mr. Martin had not read the *Romance of the Forest*, and the *Children of the Abbey*. As for Harriet, she could do nothing but collect and transcribe all the riddles of every sort she could meet with on a thin quarto of hot pressed paper. Captain Benwick pleased Anne Elliot by being a young man of considerable taste and reading, though principally in poetry. She recommended him a large allowance

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of prose in his daily study, "and on being requested to particularise, mentioned such works of our best moralists, such collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth and suffering as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse and fortify the mind by the highest precepts and the strongest examples of moral and religious genius."

When she heard that Captain Benwick was to marry Louisa Musgrove, she was perplexed. The high-spirited, joyous, talking Louisa Musgrove, and the dejected, thinking, reading Captain Benwick, seemed each of them everything that would not suit the other, their minds most dissimilar. Where could have been the attraction? Darcy talked to Elizabeth so agreeably of new books and music that she had never been so well entertained in the room before. Mrs. Bennet's weak understanding and illiberal mind had very early in her marriage put an end to all her husband's affection for her. Those who did not care for reading had to make a pretence of caring. Miss Bingley yawned when reading with Mr. Darcy, but she had to say, "There is no enjoyment like reading. How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! When I have a house of my own I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library." There are many other illustrations which I am compelled to leave out.

Jane Austen says nothing of death, but she does not hesitate sometimes to paint the darker sides of life, and on the whole she must be considered very

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lenient. Hers was no doubt an age of elopements. She says little or nothing about religion, though in her heart deeply religious. One curious reference is made in *Persuasion*: Anne Elliot knew that there had been bad habits in her cousin's life, *that Sunday travelling had been a common thing.*

CHAPTER XX

“ THERE MUST BE MANY A PAIR OF FRIENDS ”

I AM not thinking of friendships between men and women. There are many examples of such in biographies, and there would be more, I fancy, if biographies were not so much doctored as they are. In the life of Archbishop Benson we read: “ All his great friendships, especially of later years, have been with women; he was not really at home in an atmosphere of perfect equality; surround him with a certain deference and affection, and he was expansive, humorous, and racy. But with men of like age, whose views he imagined differed widely from his own, he froze and became silent and severe. . . . He thought of the Church, or rather of religion, as *the* absorbing fact of life. People of diametrically opposite views he could not really tolerate. Cordiality with them was out of the question. And he would not really ever try to meet them or argue with them. Several times, as in the Education Bill controversy, he lost ground by not being able frankly to meet and discuss matters with certain leading Radicals, who would have been quite ready to meet him half-way. But their view, or what he thought was their view, was

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incredible and unintelligible to him." Nor am I thinking of the ordinary intimacies between men. Some men have no friends in the full sense of the word. Others have a good many intimate friends, none rising clearly above the rest. I am thinking of men who have one great friend, one man whom they need, to whom they tell everything, whom they must meet as often as possible, whom they cannot do without, who influence them, and are influenced by them. Such friendships may cover parts of life, or almost the whole of life. The point is that they are supreme while they endure. I shall put down such instances as occur to me.

It is worth noting that Tennyson, so far as the record goes, had no supreme friend after A. H. Hallam. I doubt whether he had any woman friend even. *In Memoriam* was, in the full sense of the word, a sincere book, for it commemorated an affection for which the writer never found any substitute. By the way, has it been sufficiently remarked that *In Memoriam* makes but a limited appeal to the bereaved? Its intensity has carried it through; but when we think of it, we shall see that the bereavements in life that leave aching, unhealed wounds are not of the type Tennyson commemorates. Most people become soon consoled for the loss of a friend, however dear and intimate. There must be, as a rule, nearer relations to create the enduring sense of want.

Thackeray, in the proper sense, seems to have

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had no friend. It is true that he spoke of Fitzgerald as his greatest friend; but Fitzgerald and he rarely met or corresponded, and a high friendship insists on intercourse, whatever the difficulties may be. I imagine that Thackeray had close friendships with women. This was also the case with Dickens, though there can be no doubt of his passionate affection for John Forster. On one occasion Dickens signed a letter John Forster, and then wrote a quaint, pathetic apology, saying that his thoughts were always so full of Forster that he sometimes confounded Forster's identity with his own.

I was set upon my subject by reading over again, according to my annual custom, the life of Lord Macaulay. The revelation of that life was Lord Macaulay's extraordinary affection for his sisters and their children. He had one friend, however, who seems to have been in the full sense of the word a confidential friend. This friend was Mr. T. F. Ellis, a barrister of no very great mark. Ellis was an excellent classical scholar, and that was one bond of kinship between Lord Macaulay and himself; but there must have been others. Macaulay never married, and so far as the public knows, he was never even in love. This gives a peculiar interest to his views upon women, which, as careful students of his works know, were decided and defined. He says significantly, on the death of Ellis's wife, that he felt so much for his friend that to bring his wife back he would give one of his fingers, “which is more than most widowers

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would give to bring back theirs." In his history, referring to Madame de Maintenon, he describes the kind of wife a middle-aged man should choose. "When she attracted the notice of her Sovereign she could no longer boast of youth or beauty; but she possessed in an extraordinary degree those more lasting charms which men of sense whose passions age has tamed, and whose life is a life of business and care, prize most highly in a female companion. Her character was such as has been well compared to that soft green on which the eye, wearied by warm tints and glaring lights, reposes with pleasure. A just understanding; an inexhaustible and never redundant flow of rational, gentle, and sprightly conversation; a temper of which the serenity was never for a moment ruffled; a tact which surpassed the tact of her sex as much as the tact of her sex surpasses the tact of ours; such were the qualities which made the widow of a buffoon first the confidential friend and then the spouse of the proudest and most powerful of European kings." There is much more autobiography in Macaulay's writings than has yet been pointed out.

Of supreme friendships which lasted through circumstances but a brief time I may recall that of Robert Hall and James Mackintosh, when they were students together at King's College, Aberdeen. Theirs must have been a rare and lofty communion. Circumstances divided them, but they were never really estranged, and the letter of the author of

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Vindiciæ Gallicæ to the great Baptist, when Hall was under a cloud of madness, is one of the finest ever written.

There was the singular passion of friendship between Dr. Chalmers and a young man in Glasgow who was a member of his congregation, Thomas Smith. While it lasted it was a true devotion. It seemed to fulfil every condition of friendship, but it was interrupted early by Smith's death. Dr. Johnson was rich in friends, and they were friends worthy of him. There were Garrick, and Burke, and Reynolds, and Goldsmith, and Bennet Langton, and Topham Beauclerk, and Boswell. But I think the true Johnsonian will admit that the deepest affection for another man ever shown by Johnson was given to the poor apothecary Robert Levett. There was no kind of intellectual equality between the men, and nobody could see what attracted Johnson to his poor friend. In fact, people are often unable to explain friendships. But whatever the explanation, it is clear that Johnson set his heart upon him. He resolved with uncommon earnestness that whatever change might befall him he would never be separated from Dr. Levett. When Levett died he wrote the noble poem, which he surpassed only in his lines:—

“Sleep undisturbed within thy peaceful shrine
Till angels wake thee with a note like thine.”

I do not wonder that Johnson was Scott's favourite poet. There are few letters at once more

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dignified and more pathetic than that in which Johnson announces Levett's death. "So has ended the long life of a very useful and a very blameless man."

One of the most fascinating studies in friendship is the relation between Pope and Bolingbroke. Bolingbroke had a strange upbringing. His religious education was chiefly in the sermons of Dr. Manton, the Puritan who wrote the enormous commentary on the hundred and nineteenth psalm. Dr. Manton's influence did him no good. He became a drunkard and a profligate; but he had great qualities, and could be studious, hard-working, and philosophical. His wife long retained her affection for him, in spite of his manifold infidelities. Many storms were over when he became acquainted with Pope. The two men were as dissimilar as possible. Bolingbroke was handsome and commanding in appearance, and his temper was joyous and affectionate. Pope, on the other hand, was deformed, malignant, and preternaturally sensitive. Students of Whitwell Elwin will not be able, however much they wish it, to rate Pope's character high. Yet he, too, had noble qualities, and between himself and Bolingbroke there grew up a fast friendship. It seems certain that Bolingbroke supplied the ideas of the *Essay on Man*, while Pope gave the setting and the colouring. Of Bolingbroke, Pope said that he was the greatest man and one of the best friends he ever knew, and that he had known him so long and

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so truly as not possibly to be deceived. In one of Pope's letters we find this passage: “I now hold the pen for my Lord Bolingbroke, who is reading your letter between two haycocks, but his attention is somewhat diverted by casting his eyes on the clouds, not in admiration of what you say, but for fear of a shower. He is pleased with your placing him in the triumvirate between you and me, while one of us runs away with all the power like Augustus, and another with all the pleasures like Anthony. It is upon a foresight of this that he has fitted up his farm.” Pope had so strong an admiration for Bolingbroke's gifts that he said when a comet appeared he fancied it might be a coach to take Bolingbroke home. But the friendship of the two men was not based on mere admiration. Each saw deeper. When Bolingbroke hung over the bedside of the dying poet, he said: “I never knew a man that had so tender a heart for his particular friends, or more genuine friendship for mankind. I have known Pope these thirty years, and value myself more in his friendship than——” He could add no more. When Pope reviewed his life on his deathbed, and remembered all he had done for his friend, and all that his friend had done for him, he declared, “There is nothing that is meritorious but virtue and friendship, and, indeed, friendship is only a part of virtue.”

Another noble and touching friendship was that between Coleridge and Charles Lamb. Both of these

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great men passed shadowed and even tragical lives. Both emerged more and more clearly as the first among a circle of greatly endowed natures. Yet what a friendship was theirs; through what struggles, and destinies, and hungerings, and temptations, and bewilderments, and falls did it pass. To Coleridge, writes Lamb from London: "I know not what suffering scenes you have gone through at Bristol. My life has been somewhat diversified of late. The six weeks that finished last year and begun this your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad-house at Hoxton. I am not rational, and do not bite any one; but mad I was, and many a vagary my imagination played with me. Coleridge, it may convince you of my regard for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness as much as on another person [Lamb's sister], who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary frenzy." Coleridge wrote: "My happiest moments are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste. I am too late! I am already months behind! I have received my pay months beforehand! O wayward and desultory spirit of genius! Ill canst thou brook a taskmaster. The tenderest touch from the hand of obligation wounds thee like a scourge of scorpions." It was, as has been said, through cloud and sunshine and simoon that they two loved each other with a love possible only to heroic hearts. Lamb could laugh at Coleridge preaching to a button, but

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he was too wise not to understand that Coleridge's was among the mightiest of created intellects, second in England only to Shakespeare. Nor did Coleridge fail to see his friend's genius, a genius which was in one of its aspects a genius for goodness.

I wish I had space to write of the friendship between Goethe and Schiller. The colossal calm of Goethe was broken by Schiller's death. It was not apparently broken when his own son was smitten, but when he knew there was no hope for Schiller he wept in the hours of the lonely night. In the morning he inquired of a woman whether Schiller had been very ill yesterday. The woman sobbed audibly. “He is dead?” said Goethe, faintly. “You have said it,” she replied. “He is dead,” repeated Goethe, covering his eyes with his hands. Nor should we forget the friendship between Jean Paul Richter and Christian Otto. This was one of the friendships where there was a complete exchange of thought. The two were transparent to one another, and they lifted one another. “I pray thee,” said Richter to Otto, “to be my public, my reading world, my critic, my reviewer.” For fourteen years they corresponded daily, until at last they were able to live at Bayreuth together. Jean Paul had become famous, but the fellowship of Otto was sweeter than ever. Otto was near Richter when he died, and in death they were not divided, for Otto survived his friend but a few months, arranged the last manuscript of

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the unfinished *Selina*, and then quickly drooped away in sorrow. The letters between the two brim over with the largesse of human sympathy, and are an enduring memorial of a friendship which was at once heroic, tender, and truthful.

CHAPTER XXI

DR. ALEXANDER BAIN

ON Friday morning, September 18, 1903, Dr. Alexander Bain, Emeritus Professor of Logic and English Literature in the University of Aberdeen, passed away in his eighty-sixth year. His was a very strong and remarkable personality, and his work was influential in no ordinary degree. The Autobiography which he has left behind him has done something to make his individuality intelligible, but like Mark Pattison's it has failed to do him justice. I can speak of him only from the recollections of a pupil, recollections which, alas! go back for more than thirty years. Of his private life I never knew anything, and save for a few communications on literary business, I had no intercourse with him after leaving College, but I can understand that he was "thinking long to die." His work was finished, and though he did not profess to love work, he lived for it. He tells us himself that his friend John Stuart Mill's fixed idea was that he came into the world not to serve himself, but to serve his race, and that idleness, except as a condition of renewed labour, was culpable and base. His favourite text was—"The night cometh when no man can work." Here is an interesting remark in a letter to Thorn-

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ton in 1860. Thornton had been to see Oxford, and Mill recalls his own visit twenty years before, and says: "In that same holiday I completed the first draft of my Logic, and had for the first time the feeling that I had now actually accomplished something—that one certain portion of my life's work was done." I understand that on the night of his death, when he was informed that he would not recover, he immediately said: "My work is done."

Like other schoolboys of that generation in the North of Scotland, I knew Bain first through his Grammar. The book had a great sale, largely a forced sale, because it was made one of the subjects of examination in the Bursary competition, but in addition to that a considerable sale throughout the world. Having learned it and taught it, I came to know it almost by heart. It was full of the author's characteristic acuteness, and though much criticised by experts had its own value. In particular, the author pointed out many of the current mistakes in speech and print. If the teaching of grammar is of any use—which is very doubtful—Dr. Bain may have done as much as most teachers in warning pupils off the rocks. Like everything he wrote, the book was marked by a certain originality, and, shall I say, crotchetyness. Alas! I have forgotten nearly everything except a distinction he made between the use of "who" and "that," and his defence of the use of a preposition to close the sentence. Thus:

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“I must use the freedom I was born with,” and “In that dumb rhetoric which you make use of.”

Students were thus prepared to view Professor Bain with considerable curiosity when the day came for donning the red cloak. We had the advantage of his teaching in our first year when he lectured on English. At that time he was by far the most celebrated man on the professorial staff. He was perhaps the only Professor of that period who was widely known beyond the north of Scotland. The students had only vague ideas of his friendships and his fame, but they knew very well that he was somebody in the world, and not a mere provincial celebrity. The fact had due influence. They came prepared to give him a hearing. Many of them, like myself, were too young and too ignorant. I was not fifteen when I sat down in his class, and yet I remember keenly to this day his appearance and manner. Though the favourable suffrages of the outside world prepossess students, they invariably judge for themselves. None of them had ever any doubt about Bain's ability. Whether you liked him or not, whether you followed him or not, he was plainly a very strong man without a touch of weakness or silliness, equipped at every point, and within his limits master of his subject. He had also a resolute will, and was a man who had to be obeyed. Very able men sometimes fail completely to keep order in their classes. Clerk Maxwell, for example, was even a more powerful man than Bain, but dur-

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ing his professorship in Aberdeen his classroom was a scene of continual disorder. Bain was keen, alert, and commanding; the least disturbance was instantly repressed. One pupil, we will call him John Thomson, once proved unruly, and was instantly called to order by the Professor.

“John Thomson,” said he, “are you ashamed of yourself?”

“No,” was the reply.

“Well, John Thomson, I will make you ashamed of yourself. I fine you a half-crown.”

This was the only insubordination I have ever witnessed in Bain’s class. His quiet authority dominated the room.

Dr. Bain was not only an able Professor; he was also thoroughly conscientious. He did his work with scrupulous fidelity. Every student could see that his course was most carefully prepared, and that in every detail of his work he was exact and reliable. This is the quality which students admire most in a Professor. Bain never aimed at popularity. He never sought either to be admired or to be loved. There was not the faintest geniality in his manner. He never in my time made a joke, and he kept himself completely aloof from the main body of the students. He simply did his duty, and in this way obtained, if not popularity, an excellent equivalent for it. The students showed their admiration for him years after by twice electing him Lord Rector of the University. Even then he did not gush. He

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did not flatter them; he did not profess to be overpowered with the honour; he simply took up the duties and discharged them according to his lights. I should add that to students who met him in the streets he was particularly courteous. He acknowledged every salutation with a smile and by lifting his shabby hat. He was also very polite in replying to letters. More than that, he took special interest in students who showed sympathy with his views and intellectual power. Alone of all the Professors, he invited the prizemen in his classes to his house, where they had an opportunity of choosing their prizes. Among the books he also included some publications of Messrs. Chambers, particularly the *Information for the People*, to which he himself had been a contributor. The first prizeman in my year was Andrew Craik, who died shortly after taking a high wranglership at Cambridge. Bain, I remember, gave him the prize with a very kind smile, and said: "The first prize has been gained in a very distinguished and superior manner indeed by Andrew Craik." His assistants were employed in the preparation of his books more largely than may be generally known. He influenced some of them very deeply, and they became propagandists of his views. Among the best loved of his pupils was George Croom-Robertson, who became Professor in University College, London. It is not surprising that the election of an unknown young Scotsman over the head of James Martineau created resentment, but

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Croom-Robertson's ability and generosity of nature subdued all opponents, and won the friendship of Martineau himself. Bain exerted himself to find Chairs for his best scholars, and was not seldom successful. It is fair to say that among the men he most helped were some whose views on the most important of all subjects widely diverged from his own.

In appearance he recalled Democritus in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, though he was not old at the time, "a little wearish old man, somewhat melancholy by nature, averse to company in his latter days, and much given to solitude." His scanty locks of hair were thriftily spread over his bald cranium. He wore no moustache, his chin was shaven, and his face was surrounded with thick black hair. Thus his mouth was clear. His eyes and his mouth gave a certain impression of weariness and disenchantment. The face was not sad, either tragically or poetically. Its expression seemed to say: "Most things in life are irksome; teaching is irksome to me and learning to you. But we have to do our work without whining. I shall do mine, and I shall see that you do yours." I am anxious not to exaggerate, and I think my impression is right. When Dr. Bain retired from the professorship years after, he told his students that he had found it hard work, and that it was some relief to be done with it. There was no joyousness, no enthusiasm in his manner and aspect. He used to give a great place to fear, and thought that punish-

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ment in some form was more than three-fourths of the motive-power to virtue in the mass of mankind. He had also an acute sense of the penalties that attached to folly, and spoke of imprudence as the most radically incurable of all natural defects. To youth, as may be well imagined, he was a somewhat stern monitor.

Dr. Bain was in a manner the most impersonal teacher I ever knew. In one sense he was personal. Whatever he taught he taught in his own way and from his own textbooks. In essays and examinations he liked to get back what he had given. But he made no direct use of his own experiences. We knew that he was an intimate friend of John Stuart Mill, whose name in those days was great in the land, but we never knew it from himself. Of his own feelings he never spoke. He made hardly any reference to other teachers. It was as if he himself had said on each subject that came up the first word and the last. He never attempted to influence his students religiously or politically. We knew, of course, that he had abandoned the Christian faith, and the acute logicians among us probably saw that his principles, followed out strictly, involved agnosticism. But he stuck to his text. He attended when it was his turn the college chapel. I remember seeing him listening to old Principal Pirie, a man of great native vigour and very combative. Bain liked Pirie and appreciated him, as he showed in a very characteristic speech after the Principal's death. He listened at-

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tentively to the sermon, and joined heartily in the singing of the Psalms. There never was a classroom where attention was more resolutely fixed on the subject, never a classroom where fewer echoes from the outside were heard.

In my first year, Bain was understood to teach English Literature. He had his own method of instruction, and very quaint it seemed at the time and seems now. He had published a book on Rhetoric, with an elaborate analysis of the qualities of style, and he gave us each a little pamphlet of extracts from the best English writers. Our business was to touch them up till they squared with the precepts in the Professor's manual. He himself skilfully emended them one by one. Though far too young and ignorant to follow him well, many of us resented these emendations. For myself I came up with my head full of Hazlitt, and when I heard Bain criticising Shakespeare for his hyperbolic style I was indignant. There was one passage in particular, that which ends

" Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
Till tears shall drown the wind,"

on which Bain was very hard. Another was Wordsworth's verse:

" One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can."

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On this Bain observed: "The average man is unable to cope with such extravagance." On Burns's lines,

"For nature made her what she is
And never made anither,"

he remarked: "There is nothing in the language or in the thought to redeem the extravagance of the last two lines." He was very funny on Tennyson's love poetry. Thus on:

"Her feet have touch'd the meadows,
And left the daisies rosy,"

he observed that it was a strong hyperbole, but that "it retained a slight hold on actual facts"! The result was that a few of us at any rate did not believe anything he said, and thought him quite incompetent to speak on literature. That his method was entirely wrong, and that his criticisms were often ridiculous, I have no doubt. But the intelligent student might have learned much from him, for his acute mind was always working. Thus, like Lowell, he disbelieved entirely in the alleged objectivity of Shakespeare, and maintained that his works showed amongst other things a nature of exceptional generosity and cheerfulness. Dr. Bain would have commanded more confidence as a corrector if he had written better himself. Of his style it may justly be remarked that it is singularly charmless. He was very fond of that dangerous point the semi-

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colon, and added clause after clause till everything dragged. I kept till lately an essay on which he wrote a criticism in red ink, which ran as follows: "A model of lucid statement; handwriting bad; punctuation very defective."

Two years later we met him in the class of Logic and Psychology. Of this logic I remember nothing. His psychology was another matter. The pupil must have been dull indeed who would not understand. One of his ablest scholars has explained in the *Times* the great work he did on this subject. I am not in the very least degree qualified to discuss it, but I remember how Professor James spoke of him at Harvard some years ago. To some of us the manner in which he connected philosophy and psychology was partly repellent and partly absurd. My closest companion in these days, Robert Neil, afterwards of Cambridge, was wont to quote one of his memorable sentences: "The Organ of Smell is the Nose." Still, even the dullest and the most careless could not fail to see how much power and originality marked his psychological work. The abler men knew how serious were the bearings of his monism, and some of them were driven into strong antagonism. Of these was Robertson Smith. There was a legend that Robertson Smith in answering Bain's examination papers gave the replies he had heard in the class and appended refutations. However this may be, Smith publicly said that Bain was the most powerful teacher he had ever been under,

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and that he had not been able to accept his teaching in any of its essentials. I do not think Bain relished the opposition. When he wrote a testimonial for Smith, he said that there could be no doubt as to Smith's extraordinary powers of acquisition. Whether those powers of acquisition were accompanied by equal powers of origination remained to be seen. Smith rather resented the insinuation. When I go back I can see that we were not old enough to understand the shrewd, practical wisdom evinced in Bain's comments on life. One of his points I clearly recollect was his insistence on the fact that no triumph is ever complete. There was always something to mar it.

Bain's students saw much of him, and much that was very noble, but they did not see the best. The testimony of those brought into intimate relations with him proved that under his reserved and cold exterior there burned a nature of great intensity and tenderness. Professor Blaikie, who was his fellow-student, describes him in his *Autobiography* as simple, kindly, and remarkable for the calmness of his mind and manner. Dr. Bain was brought up under the ministry of the famous Dr. Kidd, the chief evangelical preacher in the Aberdeen of his day. To Dr. Stark's *Life of Dr. Kidd* Dr. Bain contributes a most interesting paper in which he refers particularly to the old preacher's prayers and says: "I can only choose a few illustrative points which have clung to my memory. His Baptismal prayer

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was fixed into a set form, but yet the touches it contained seemed never to tire by repetition. Two passages in particular I am able to quote. The first was returning thanks to God 'for His goodness to the mother in the time of nature's sorrow,' with a petition to perfect her recovery. More striking still was the passage where he prayed for 'all who have ever been baptized in this place,' adding, 'Wherever they are, by sea or by land, we follow them with our prayers, that none of them may be lost on the morning of the great Day.' " Another fellow-student of Bain's was the beloved David Masson, who happily survives him. Their friendship continued firm and fast through all the years.

CHAPTER XXII

CONCERNING SPECTACLES

WHEN you detect in yourself an inability to distinguish between 3 and 8 when the figures are small, when you loathe increasingly the consultation of railway time-tables, when you are inclined to pass over the small print in the newspapers, your friends will advise you to consider the propriety of using spectacles. They may even declare that delay in getting spectacles when they are needed leads to great confusion of mind and to feeble and tottering gait.

Whether we need spectacles or not for the bodily eyes, I am sure we need them for the eyes of the mind. If we were perfect we should not need them. Our vision would then be true; we should be able to judge the world. As things are, our general imperfection means among many other things an imperfection in vision, and an incapacity to give righteous judgment. The attempt to look at nature and human nature with the naked eye is bound to fail. It is told of Jacques Balmat, the man who first climbed Mont Blanc, that he went without spectacles. Nothing much was known about climbing then. It was not understood how the snows affected the sight. When Balmat came down he found him-

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self almost blind, and his skin was peeling off his face, his eyes were quite bloodshot, and people hardly knew him. The next explorers took spectacles, and ever since mountain spectacles have been one of the trades of Switzerland. The spectacled vision is the only vision which gives you the full view of the mountain. There is a pretty story at the beginning of *Kim*, which tells how the curator, who is understood to represent Mr. Kipling's father, presented the Lama with a pair of spectacles. The Lama had heavily scraped horn spectacles. But when he put on the new pair, he exclaimed, "A feather! A very feather upon the face!" The old man turned his face delightedly, and wrinkled up his nose. "How scarcely do I feel them! How clearly, do I see!"

Dean Swift began by looking at human nature with the naked eye, and he ended just as Balzat ended, with bloodshot and almost blind eyes. In his able little book on Thackeray, Mr. Charles Whibley criticises severely Thackeray's lecture on Swift as a blot upon his literary reputation. Thackeray asked, "What fever was boiling in him that he should see the world bloodshot?" Mr. Whibley scarcely does justice to Thackeray, for Thackeray acknowledges that Swift "was a reverent and pious spirit—for Swift could love and could pray. Through the storms and tempests of his furious mind the stars of religion and love broke out in the blue, shining securely, though hidden by the driving

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clouds and the maddened hurricane of his life." But what Swift saw was the worthlessness of all mankind, the pettiness, cruelty, pride, imbecility, the general vanity, the foolish pretensions, the mock greatness, the pompous dulness, the mean men, the base successes. In a manner no one saw more deeply and more keenly, and yet no one more utterly missed the way and the truth.

On the eyes of the soul we must put the spectacles of charity—to use a word which has a wide stretch of meaning. To begin with its full sense of love. There is nothing more derided than the raptures of a young affection. But it may be doubted whether any people in the world are so wise as young, true lovers. They see the best in each other, that best which may in the end be victorious over all that mars and flaws it, and outlast every evil element. For love not only sees, but draws out. It brings into action the highest energies of the soul, and calls forth its deep and shrouded beauties. They are happy indeed who maintain that vision through the tests and trials of life. You will remember Emerson's significant parable, *Each and All*.

"The lover watched his graceful maid,
As 'mid the virgin train she strayed,
Nor knew her beauty's best attire
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.
At last she came to his hermitage,
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage:—
The gay enchantment was undone,
A gentle wife, but fairy none."

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That is not the end of the story if it is a story of true love. "Love is believing, and the best is truest."

To look aright on human beings we must wear the spectacles of an indulgent kindness. It is in this way we shall get the best and the most out of the world. There is a mawkish, silly, and indecent charity, but there are those who without folly and without untruth can think of what may be pleaded in mitigation of the worst offenders. Dickens delighted to describe such people, but he never surpassed his picture of Traddles in *David Copperfield*. When Traddles chose the dearest girl in the world none of her sisters could endure the thought of her ever being married. In particular, Sarah, who had something the matter with her spine, objected violently.

"'She clenched both her hands,' said Traddles; 'shut her eyes; turned lead-colour; became perfectly stiff; and took nothing for two days but toast and water administered with a teaspoon.'

"'What a very unpleasant girl,' remarked David Copperfield.

"'Oh, I beg your pardon, Copperfield,' said Traddles. 'She is a very charming girl, but she had a great deal of feeling.'" Serious also was the grief of her mother, which mounted from her legs into her chest, and then into her head. "As I mentioned on a former occasion, she is a very superior woman, but has lost the use of her limbs. Whatever

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occurs to harass her usually settles in her legs, but on this occasion it mounted to the chest, and then to the head, and in short, pervaded the whole system in a most alarming manner. However, they brought her through it by unremitting and affectionate attention."

But the triumph of Traddles' charity is his remark on the detestable Uriah Heep.

"He is a monster of meanness,' said my aunt.

"Really, I don't know about that,' observed Traddles, thoughtfully. 'Many people can be very mean when they give their minds to it.'"

The observation, perhaps, was in excess. Nor should I care to defend Deacon Solomon Rising, of Connecticut. The deacon was giving evidence about Mr. Elijah Hitchcock, a constable whose character was under scrutiny.

"Deacon Solomon Rising,' said the judge, 'do you think Mr. Hitchcock is a dishonest man?'

"Oh, no, sir, not by any means.'

"Well, do you think that he is a mean man?'

"Well, with regard to that,' said the deacon, a little more deliberately, 'I may say that I do not really think he is a mean man; I have sometimes thought he was what you might call a keeferful man—a prudent man, so to speak.'

"What do you mean by a prudent man?'

"Well, I mean this, that at one time he had an execution for four dollars against the old widow Witter back here, and he went up to her house, and

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levied on a lot of ducks, and he chased them ducks one at a time round the house pooty much all day, and every time he caught a duck he'd set right down and wring its neck, and charge mileage, and the mileage amounted to more than the debt. Nothing mean about it as I know of, but I always thought that Mr. Hitchcock was a very prudent man.'”

It is very wise to use spectacles in contemplating your surroundings and your possessions. I have always liked very much the Spaniard who was partial to cherries, and put on spectacles to eat them in order that they might look bigger. There is generally something on which the heart may fasten, even in the bleakest and most uncongenial sphere. Long ago I read of a Scottish minister who had an ugly little church. The church, however, boasted a beautiful Norman door. The minister took such pride in the door, that he came to believe all the building as fair as the entrance, and to consider himself more highly favoured than his brethren in city cathedrals. *Great Expectations*, that late novel in which Dickens so marvellously recovered his early form, has few more delightful passages than the story of Pip's visit to Mr. Wemmick's cottage at Walworth. The house was a little wooden cottage in the midst of plots of garden, and the top of it was cut out and painted like a battery mounted with guns. It had a real flagstaff, and on Sundays Wemmick ran up a real flag. “Then look here, after I have crossed this bridge I hoist it up so—and cut off the com-

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munication." The bridge was a plank, and it crossed a chasm about four feet wide and two deep. "But it was very pleasing to see the pride with which he hoisted it up and made it fast; smiling as he did so with a relish, and not merely mechanically." There was a gun which was fired at nine o'clock every night, Greenwich time. At the back there was a pig, and there were also fowls and rabbits. Wemmick's aged father was even more proud of it than his son. "This is a fine place of my son's, sir," cried the old man, while I nodded as hard as I possibly could. "This is a pretty pleasure-ground, sir. This spot and the beautiful works upon it ought to be kept together by the Nation after my son's time for the people's enjoyment." Wemmick explained to Pip, as he smoked a pipe, that it had taken him a good many years to bring the property up to its present pitch of perfection. We smile at this, but it would be well for most of us that we could see our possessions as Wemmick saw his.

I might speak of the spectacles of prejudice and of fear, but it is hardly needful. It is often a real necessity to lay the spectacles of prejudice aside in judging the work of another. I do not say that we are to forget a man's past in estimating his present. That is impossible, but I am certain that there is no more fruitful cause of misery and mischief and injustice than prejudice. We need to have a special fear of ourselves when we come to speak or write of those who have opposed us, and perhaps injured us.

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Then the spectacles of fear that are always looking into the future and seeing a lion in every mouse should be smashed in pieces. We cannot see into the future, and the best provision we can make for it is to live the days wisely as they pass.

I do not forget that the spectacles of partiality, and even of love, may sometimes deceive us. They are most deceiving, perhaps, in the case of children. Outsiders are often compelled to see that parents are cruelly blind to their children's faults and needs. Nor is there any such thing as true love without the capacity for moral indignation. There is no value in praise from some men. They cannot blame, and there is no worth in the praise of those who cannot blame on due cause shown. The grossly amiable man usually makes a failure of his life. Sydney Smith says that Sir James Mackintosh's chief foible was indiscriminate praise. He amused himself once in writing a termination of a speech for Mackintosh. It ran thus:—

“It is impossible to conclude these observations without expressing the obligations I am under to a person in a much more humble scene of life,—I mean, sir, the hackney-coachman by whom I have been driven to this meeting. To pass safely through the streets of a crowded metropolis must require, on the part of the driver, no common assemblage of qualities. He must have caution without timidity, activity without precipitation, and courage without rashness; he must have a clear perception of his object, and a dexterous use of his means. I can safely say of the individual in question, that, for a moderate reward, he has displayed unwearied skill; and to him I shall never forget that I owe unfractured integrity of

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limb, exemption from pain, and perhaps prolongation of existence.

“Nor can I pass over the encouraging cheerfulness with which I was received by the waiter, nor the useful blaze of light communicated by the link-boys, as I descended from the carriage. It was with no common pleasure that I remarked in these men, not the mercenary bustle of venal service, but the genuine effusions of untutored benevolence: not the rapacity of subordinate agency, but the alacrity of humble friendship. What may not be said of a country where all the little accidents of life bring forth the hidden qualities of the heart,—where her vehicles are driven, her streets illumined, and her bells answered, by men teeming with all the refinements of civilised life?

“I cannot conclude, sir, without thanking you for the very clear and distinct manner in which you have announced the proposition on which we are to vote. It is but common justice to add, that public assemblies rarely witness articulation so perfect, language so select, and a manner so eminently remarkable for everything that is kind, impartial, and just.’”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ART OF PACKING

THE art of packing is confessedly rare and difficult, and I never mastered it. In the old days when I had to do my best, there was nothing for it but brute force. A bag or a trunk was a thing to be subdued and overcome. When a student, I purchased as large a box as I could afford, and when the end of the session arrived I put everything into my box, and then sat down on it till it was brought to reason. The results were not entirely satisfactory, but they were the best I could achieve.

Later on my difficulties increased. Like most men I have an ineradicable prejudice against luggage. When I put a bag or a box into the luggage van it is with small hope of ever seeing it again. For ten minutes after in the railway carriage I think of how I shall be able to get on if my luggage vanishes into space. For those who cannot learn to pack, the one resource is to get some one who will pack for them. Wonderful is the competency of some packers. They put in everything you want, and nothing else. They put it in small compass. They pack it in such a way that it emerges uninjured. I praise, and admire, and thank them. If there is trouble it comes in at the other end. When you have to return you

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may find, if left alone, that you cannot get the things back into their place. In that case you will be followed for days after your return by mysterious parcels sent from the hotel. This is humiliating enough, but perhaps you cannot help it. A delightful writer whose hand, alas! is cold to-day has described the adventures of a husband and wife who agreed on their honeymoon to have their luggage put together. The lady had her preferences, and so had the gentleman. She wished to have with her five paint boxes, six sketch-books, two cameras, three kodaks, a butterfly net and box, a camp stool, a formidable array of hats, three sunshades of different colours, and a collection of rugs and wraps fit for the Arctic regions. They were going to the Italian Lakes at the hottest time of the year. The gentleman despised all these things, but he could not get on without a large assortment of boots and shoes, and a series of volumes on the geological strata of the Alps and the Renaissance in Lombardy. "Trouble followed," as the theological student said in summarising the experience of Jonah. At the end of the journey, the lady found her best comb smashed, a precious silver mirror shattered to atoms, her dresses crushed, and her hats reduced to jellies.

I thought about my many adventures in packing the other day when I was dictating some articles for a halfpenny paper. In these journals a thousand words is the limit, and if you can get your

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matter into five hundred words, so much the better. Every well-edited journal seeks to have a justification for everything it prints. Many people fancy that editors have difficulty in filling their columns. If they have, it is a proof that they are incompetent. Every journal in a healthy state is compelled to reject constantly articles with a good claim to publication. But in a halfpenny daily, where many subjects must be touched, the problem is acute. It is a question of packing. In the first place, no article should be packed in it that is not needed. Every paragraph should be its own justification. Then the articles should be skilfully packed, and not rumbled and crushed. It is no credit to get many things into a small bag if they all emerge damaged. Many writers would find it useful to take a thousand words of their writing and reduce the thousand to five hundred without impairing the effect. It is not easy with writing that is worth anything. A theological professor, criticising a student's sermon, said that the half of it had better be omitted, and it did not matter which half. You cannot condense your article simply by cutting it in two. You must rewrite it upon another scale. It is not enough to be brief. You must be interesting, and it is possible and very easy to be both brief and tedious. The editing of the ideal halfpenny newspaper, simple as it seems to the outsider, is in reality as difficult as the editing of the *Times*, for every headed paragraph, however short, is a study in the

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art of condensation. I quite understand that certain subjects cannot be satisfactorily dealt with in very brief articles or paragraphs. Nevertheless, the man who runs to length should suspect himself. There are preachers who think that the religion of the country is dying out because people object to sermons an hour long. But the old story comes up irresistibly. If a man cannot strike oil in twenty minutes, he had better cease boring.

This leads me to say that the art of packing is the art of life. What shall we do with the day? Here are the twelve hours before us. What work can we put into them? A very favourite theme of Addison's *Spectator* was the waste of the day, especially by fine ladies. This is a specimen:

Saturday.—Rose at eight o'clock in the morning. Sat down to my toilette.

From eight to nine. Shifted a patch for half an hour before I could determine it. Fixed it above my left eyebrow.

From nine to twelve. Drank my tea and dressed.

From twelve to two. At chapel. A great deal of good company. Mem.—The third air in the new opera. Lady Blithe dressed frightfully.

From three to four. Dined. Miss Kitty called upon me to go to the opera before I was risen from table.

From dinner to six. Drank tea. Turned off a footman for being rude to Veny.

Six o'clock. Went to the opera. I did not see Mr. Froth till the beginning of the second act. Mr. Froth talked to a gentleman in a black wig; bowed to a lady in the front box. Mr. Froth and his friend clapped Nicolini in the third act. Mr. Froth cried out 'Ancora.' Mr. Froth led me to my chair. I think he squeezed my hand.

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Eleven at night. Went to bed. Melancholy dreams. Methought Nicolini said he was Mr. Froth.

Sunday.—Indisposed.

There are people who never waste a moment, who get up very early, and have done much work by breakfast, who are always pulling out pen, pencil, or needle, while others seem unemployed. I remember Robertson Smith telling me that he learned Italian when he was dressing. This perhaps may be overdone. There may be seasons and spaces which it is not worth while to fill with an occupation. Is it worth while to read at meals or out of doors? I think not, unless one is very lonely indeed. Haydon, the painter, tells us a pleasant story of Sir Walter Scott. Sir Walter went to see a picture of Haydon's which was on view. He arrived before the door was open, and was told that the man would not be long in coming. He quietly sat down and waited. Haydon found him thus, and delightedly records it as a beautiful trait of this great genius. It was a beautiful trait, but many of us would have tried to fill up the short interval somehow.

The truth is that in order to give out you must take in, and that the time spent in absorbing is just as necessary and just as well spent as the time spent in testifying. The other day I was in a country town, and took out of the circulating library two books I had not seen for years—the Life of Bishop Wilberforce and the Life of Dean Hook. Both were indefatigable men. Of Wilberforce it was said

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that he could write two letters at once, one with his left hand and the other with his right. Also it is said that he could dictate seven letters at one and the same time. I do not believe these stories, but many people do believe them. Wilberforce was an early riser, he was always writing, always preaching, always travelling, and being a man of fine gifts, he won a great position. Yet his life on the whole was impaired and disappointed. He never succeeded in achieving the place of his ambition. He saw over and over again men preferred to him who were conspicuously his inferiors. He came under a general suspicion of insincerity. The Queen suspected him, and so did many of her subjects. Yet I think unprejudiced readers of his letters and journals will see that in intention he was always honest. What injured him was that he knew nothing. He read practically nothing, he was not in any sense a scholar; he thought the time spent in study was wasted time. In spite of his ignorance he rushed headlong into controversies where no man can do any good who is not equipped with the results of patient and scholarly investigation. Thus he assailed the authors of *Essay and Reviews* in the *Quarterly*, and declared them enemies of the Christian faith. In the same periodical he made a furious onslaught on Darwin. It is safe to say that Wilberforce had given moments to science where Darwin had given days, and his article is simply presumptuous nonsense. He rushed into a fray about

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Bishop Hampden, and it turned out in the end that he had not read Hampden's books. Having got into false positions, he had to get out of them as best he could, and he did not get out of them well. How much more Wilberforce would have accomplished if he had been content to be quiet at times! Dean Hook was another example of immense and prolonged industry. He, too, was an early riser. He sometimes wrote three sermons in one day. Hook was a reader as well as a writer, and he has left many books behind him, but I doubt whether any of them will live. There was no touch of intellectual distinction about him, nothing at all of the saving grace of style. Honest, laborious, bold, ambitious, he did good and even great work in his day, perhaps the best work that he could accomplish, and yet one imagines that under conditions of more leisure and less absorption he might have done something of another kind. For myself, I particularly dislike people who profess to be busy, and seem to be hurried, people who look at the clock when you visit them, or when they visit you. We must not try to pack life too close.

CHAPTER XXIV.

“WORK-DRUNKENNESS”

AMONG the most interesting passages in Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography* are those in which he expounds the ethics of work. Spencer was of opinion that many people were mad about work, that they habitually overworked themselves in a way that saddened and shortened their lives. Thus he remonstrates very strongly with his American friend Youmans for his tendency to undue self-sacrifice. Youmans came over to this country to recruit, and found himself no better when he returned to America. He wrote despondently to Spencer, who answered him in pungent terms. “That you will either cut short your life or incapacitate yourself is an inference one cannot avoid drawing; seeing that in your case, as in a host of other cases, experience seems to have not the slightest effect. It is a kind of work-drunkenness, and you seem to be no more able to resist the temptation than the dipsomaniac resists alcohol. Excuse my strong expressions. I use them in the hope that they may do some good, though it is a very faint hope. The only course that could give me any confidence that you will not bring your career of usefulness to a premature close would be to learn that you had put yourself under the despotic

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control of your sister; and even if you did this, I suspect you would quickly break the agreement under the pressure of some fancied necessity, as though fulfilment of some passing purpose was necessary and maintenance of life unnecessary! What is the use of all this propagation of knowledge if it is to end in such results?" Spencer grimly remarks that his anticipation was fulfilled. Youmans brought his life to a premature close. "Though he reached the age of sixty-six, yet that his death at that age was premature is shown by the fact that both his parents were then alive."

Almost from the beginning of his career Spencer was deliberately and willingly idle at times. His danger, as he conceived it, was not that of doing too little, but that of doing too much. He considered that men ought to raise more often the question, Is the game worth the candle? Will what is gained duly compensate for what must be paid? Let means and ends be weighed. Life is not for work, but work is for life, and when it is carried to the extent of undermining life or unduly absorbing it, work is not praiseworthy, but blameworthy. The progress of mankind should liberate life more and more from mere toil, and make it available for relaxation, for pleasurable culture, for æsthetic gratification, for travel, for games. But for most people the path of duty is identified with devotion to work, and you may often see a busy man, half invalided by ceaseless toil, persist, in spite of the expostulations

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of his family and friends, in daily making himself worse by over-application. Spencer expressed the wish that he had a keeper who would restrain him when he was doing too much. As might be expected, he gravely disapproved of American energy. He considered that the fault of American life was an over-devotion to work, and he believed that the future had in store a new ideal, differing as much from the present ideal of industrialism as that ideal differs from past ideals of militancy.

Undoubtedly the subject is worth pondering. Many of us in these strenuous days have to suffer the remonstrances of kind friends who declare we are working too hard. They cannot understand why we should not take things in moderation, and undoubtedly there is something in what they say. There are laws of life which cannot be neglected with impunity. It is a poor heart that never rejoices; it is a poor life into which no sunshine falls. When we are loaded day by day with duties and obligations which we have just strength enough to perform, which fill up every available minute, when we never travel, never rest, never relax ourselves in the company of friends, we are not living as we ought to live.

There must be an enjoyment of life in order to attain its full efficiency; there must be more than a ceremonious recognition of the laws of health. Above all, there must be a certain rest of soul. Even in the midst of work we should be able to escape in

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thought from the noise and confusion of the battle, and possess ourselves in peace.

Yet I am persuaded that even now there is not half so much danger of overwork as of underwork. And also that the life which leans to the first is at once more fruitful and more enjoying than the life which leans to the second. A study of Herbert Spencer's own experiences is instructive.

In the first place, for many of us there is little choice. Spencer had neither wife nor child. He was content at first with a very small income. His moderate wants were supplied, and he was free for his chosen task. The great majority of us have no private means to begin with. We have to depend on our own exertions for every penny we possess. Other lives are linked with ours, and have claims upon us that admit of no denial. The question of how much work or how little work we are to do in life is solved for us. We have our duty to fulfil in the sphere in which we are placed, and in the faithful fulfilment of that we find scope for all our energies.

But there is more to say. Does it not frequently happen that work only begins to tell when it is carried on to the point of sacrifice? This may be because of the struggle for existence. I can conceive a student determining to work a few hours a day, giving the rest to recreation. But if he fixes on three hours, let us say, he will find that some one of equal or superior gifts is working six hours, and will

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certainly come in before him. That, however, is a superficial explanation. I cannot, after much reflection, explain the fact, but the fact is there. It is a vital truth that work carried beyond the boundary of the natural strength is the work that makes its mark in the world. A man has made no mark, and asks himself why. It is because he has not paid the price of making the mark.

It looks very well in theory to say you have a certain income; you have a decent business; you ought to be satisfied with the returns and go on quietly. Why should you harass yourself trying to get more? This looks unanswerable, but it is very easily answered. The condition on which most incomes, and I should think nearly all businesses are held, is that there should be a constant effort after progress. Can business men say, “ We will restrict ourselves to what we are doing; we will make no provision for expansion; we will not try after new markets ”? Business men who say this are sure to be ousted. The old markets will be taken from them because they have refused to reach out to the new. Doubtless in their endeavours to overtake business they will make losses, but if they limit the losses to their capacity they will in the long run succeed better than if they coasted cautiously by the shore, and never ventured out into the open sea.

The truth is, however, that most men who overwork themselves cannot help it. They are, as it were, possessed by some spirit, be it good or be it

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evil. They hear a call and obey it, not waiting nicely to calculate the results. Should men be ambitious? Ambitious means, etymologically, I suppose, a going about to canvass for the support of others. Well, it is in this way, and in this way only, that leaders are made. In this way only can a party be constructed and held together, and advanced. In every department of life we need leaders sorely. The true leader has probably some pleasure in leading, but he does not seek after leadership for the sake of any prize it gives. He works in obedience to an inner irresistible impulse. Then there are those who give themselves to great causes. These, or the noblest of them, often deliberately elect to leave those causes in the knowledge that they will have no visible success in their battle here. To identify themselves with certain contentions means exclusion from much that makes life desirable. It means hard fighting, and a rain of blows. It certainly cannot mean a visible coronation on the earth, yet it means happiness of the truest and deepest kind. It was not chosen for that happiness; the choice was the result of an impulse which could not be thwarted. Toil for our dear ones is very sweet. The losing of oneself sustains many a heart in peace and joy, through the glare and turmoil of human existence. But the plunge into the midcurrent of human strife is not usually taken after a process of argument. "I am willing to spend and be spent for you."

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Was Spencer himself happier than men who never husbanded their energies? He produced his system, no doubt, but he seemed to lose much in the process. For one thing he had to kill time. If he worked three hours in a day he had done his task, and as he did not care for reading and could only maintain social intercourse on his own terms, he had difficulty in getting through the hours without weariness. There are many of us who have had to deal with our own difficulties, but have been mercifully spared Spencer's peculiar trial. A really hard worker does not know what killing time means. He cannot but remember that time is killing him. But I am sure there will not be a few readers of these lines who look back upon their lives, and remember in them many hours which they did not know how to employ. Their trouble has rather been that the hours of the day were too few. They have had always more in the way of work and enjoyment than they could ever compass. Sometimes sheer weakness or illness may make a leisure hour greatly looked forward to quite useless, but, given ordinary conditions of things, *ennui* is a word for whose meaning they have to look out in the dictionary. They know nothing of it themselves. What they do know is that the sufferers from the malady find it intolerable. Surely it is infinitely better to suffer from the weariness of overwork than to find time hanging heavy on one's hands.

Spencer suffered intensely from the concentration

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of his interest upon himself. This gives an air of meanness and littleness to a character which was essentially neither mean nor little, but in many points great. To be delivered from morbid introspection is one of the chief of blessings. The over-worked man, the work-drunken man, if you choose to call him so, is free from that. He has no time to think of himself, and he is saved thereby, from innumerable ills.

But I have been leading up all the while to a challenge—Is it true that over-worked men are less happy, less healthy, and shorter lived than others? I do not believe it. Let any one think over the list of his friends. There are three or four of my friends who might fairly be described as work-drunken. They are always busy and always ready to take on more work. Two of them are not physically robust, but, save at times of immense pressure, they are the most cheerful and gentle men I know. They never brood, they are generally hopeful; they have little relaxation, but what they have is relished with an intensity of joy. They are the people who keep young in the true sense of the word. They have the spirit that secures the happiness because it does not shrink from the unhappiness of working days. They have their times of full sunshine given to happy memories, happy experiences, and happy hopes. I think of others who are under-worked, and I will not say that I have not sometimes envied them their leisure, but I have never envied them long, nor

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have I ever felt that the envy was rational. It would be well perhaps if we knew just how much we ought to do. But in a life like this our calculations are rough and precarious, and we are upon the right side, as we escape from self and selfishness. What drains and exhausts vitality is work carried on anxiously, work accompanied with worry, and work generally brings worry because it is not well and thoroughly done. Spencer did his part in life, and we have no right to criticise him, but if he could have forgotten himself at times he would have left a fairer and nobler record.

CHAPTER XXV

“MELTED DOWN FOR THE TALLOW TRADE”

“Be courteous, be obliging, Dan,” said Sir Hugo to Daniel Deronda, “but don’t give yourself over to be melted down for the tallow trade.”

During the holiday season I wakened one morning to the unwonted consciousness that I had a whole forenoon to dispose of at my own will and pleasure. Immediately three manuscripts presented themselves to my mind. They were all from strangers who had written asking me to read the manuscripts, give an opinion on them, and if possible get them published. It was perhaps my duty to read those manuscripts, and yet the prospect was sufficiently bleak. There were so many other things that I wished to do, and the doing of which seemed likely to be a great deal more useful. So I came to a problem which appeals not only to the great and eminent few but to all of us who are keeping our heads above water. How far should the claims of strangers be allowed to intrude upon the work of life?

Going up to the study, I read a sketch of a distinguished preacher who died lately. His friend said that this minister was in early years an earnest student, and continued to be so in intention, but he

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was so mobbed by details that he was unable to satisfy the claims of the intellect. He was so busy that he could not find time to read. Then I took up a new book by Lilian Whiting called *Life Radiant*, and to my delight I found that she had discussed my problem for me with much insight, good feeling, and sound sense. Her chapter may be called “A Study in the Ethics of Interruption.” I take my own way, but Miss Whiting’s essays on this and kindred themes may be cordially recommended. She is more hopeful than I am about the prospects of telepathy and such things. There is charm in her writing, the charm which belongs to a kind and hopeful and sanguine nature.

There are two sides to the question. In the first place, a man must do the work of his life, and he must do it day by day. He cannot do it as it should be done unless he concentrates on it his mental energy for the time. There are very few of us who can maintain this concentration through constant interruptions. Once we settle down to the bit of work that presents itself we can make some progress if we are left alone, but callers and letters and messages throw us off the track, and devastate our purpose. We cannot begin where we left off, and the golden morning slips by without leaving any solid and tangible product. If we are to do our work we must reserve for it certain hours, and keep these hours secure.

On the other hand, there is the great and binding

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claim of humanity. The unwelcome visitor seems to say, "Do you desire to serve humanity? I am humanity." The letter from a stranger seems to demand an answer. It is very difficult if not impossible to get rid of the feeling that every human being who writes to you civilly ought to have a reply. It is an instinct of the heart to uphold the falling and to raise the fallen. Nor would there be any difficulty in following out this conviction if the trials that called for relief were great trials. A voice from the depths commands a hearing. But mostly you are annoyed about small trifling matters. They take up time and patience, and melt you down into tallow by degrees, but they are in themselves insignificant. Miss Whiting states the case very well. "A writer who may be pressed for time, finds in his mail matter a number of personal requests from strangers. One packet contains manuscripts, perhaps, which a woman from Montana entreats especially to be read, and returned with advice or suggestion. Some one in Texas wants a paragraph copied that he may use it in compiling a calendar: an individual in Indiana has a collection of autographs for sale, and begs to know of the ways and means for disposing of them; and an author in Arizona desires that a possible publisher be secured for her novel. And so the requests run on."

There is another difficulty. It is always a delight to encourage. It is one of the pleasantest

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things in the world to congratulate a young author on a triumphant success. The noble pleasure of praising strengthens the giver and the receiver. But in the vast majority of cases one has to search anxiously and perhaps awkwardly enough for phrases that decently disguise disappointment. What you wish to say to the widow who has been left destitute, and has been induced to believe that she can earn a living for her children by her pen, is that she has no faculty. How are you to say it? Whatever way you say it, it will give disappointment, and the pain reacts on one's self. It is harder, but still not difficult, to give sympathy to those who really deserve it, who have been doing their best, and kept down by circumstances. But here again it is often quite evident that censure rather than sympathy is needed. How are we to say, “I am very sorry, but it is all your own fault”? It is never pleasant to say no, and yet humanity is not easily succoured, and it is only now and then that efficient and timely help can be given.

The problem does not concern those who deliberately choose as their life-work a business of details. I find in a newspaper an extract from the annual report of the Rector of Spitalfields. He describes the applicants for help who come to his parish room any morning, Englishmen and alien, Christian and Jew, drunken and sober, worthy and base, thrifty and profligate. The following are sample requests:—

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'Bread for my children.'

'Please send "nuss"; mother's awful bad.'

'Boots for my boy. He's got none, and can't go to school, and the School Board's sent me a summons.'

'To know if you'll go bail for my son that's in a bit of trouble.'

'I thought perhaps you'd help me to a bit o' black, to follow him respectable to the grave.'

'D'ye mind renewing my hawker's licence? Yer did last year, didn't yer?'

'Shoeblick ain't much use without brushes, and they was only new last week. But there y'are, s'help me, sir, they 'as took the lot afore my werry eyes.'

'And so on,' adds the rector, 'day after day, and year after year.'

This excellent clergyman is doing the work to which he has dedicated himself in meeting these applications as best he can. Dr. Lightfoot wished to write a history of the fourth century, and he had unique qualifications for the task. But when he was offered the Bishopric of Durham he thought it his duty to accept it. He knew very well that most of his life in Durham would have to be spent in interviews, examinations, sermons, addresses, and the like, and that it would be impossible for him to continue making contributions to scholarship on the old scale. We may think he chose well or ill, but he knew best himself, and he chose with his eyes open. A man may concentrate himself on writing a few books, or he may choose to be a journalist. If he elects journalism as a profession he knows very well that his efforts must be scattered and fragmentary, and soon forgotten. He might possibly be remembered

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longer if he devoted himself to work that had a chance of endurance, but he weighs the claims and chances, and if he chooses to say that journalism gives him opportunities and influence not open otherwise, he is entitled to have his way, and not entitled to repine at the necessary conditions. Macaulay felt very strongly the conflict between the claims of politics and the claims of literature. He came even to grudge the time spent on his essays; it was stolen from his history. But if Macaulay had chosen to be a politician and to leave literature alone, he would no doubt have still done a great work, though as a politician he would have been compelled to submit to interruptions and to distractions of every kind.

The real problem is not the conflict between one form of work and another, but the conflict between regular work, work for which a man is paid, work to which he has given himself, and irregular unpaid service given in compliance with the claims of those who are in a manner strangers. I once travelled for a day with a famous American Bishop. He had evidently prepared himself for some literary task, but somehow a little old lady had fastened herself on to him, and she kept talking through the hours. The Bishop managed to be civil perhaps, but that is the most that could be said of him.

I think it may be said as a general rule that the work of your life, the work to which you have given yourself, must be done and done as well as you can

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do it. That is the main thing. This is the way in which one may best serve humanity. If a clergyman is expected to preach regularly, he must mind his pulpit first. It is no excuse for a badly prepared sermon to say that he was busy through the week attending this meeting and that. This means simply that he was too busy to do his duty. The journalist must not neglect his work in order to deliver harangues. The student must at all cost keep his hours. He must not allow his morning to be broken up; he must not suffer the distractions of life to get in the way. The days are passing, and the weeks and the months and the years. Life shrinks and dwindles into a narrow compass. It is high time to be doing something on a regular plan in a settled way. Otherwise in a multitude of trifles the golden opportunity slips. In other words, concentration is necessary, and interruptions must be ended at any cost. If not, everything we do will be blurred and stained by error, shortcoming, and slovenliness.

But when the first claims of duty are satisfied, and these are the first claims, we have to ask what spare strength and leisure we can give away. The heart that is sensitive to human need longs to give, and there are more things than money that can be given—thought and counsel and kindness and patience. There are workers who are never exhausted or wearied. They have much to give, and they give it. I have often recalled Mr. Gladstone's illimitable

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goodness in this way. He was always ready to answer, and his innumerable postcards, which were so often ridiculed, were a genuine and striking proof of a good, kind heart. Sir Walter Scott in the hey-day of his strength accomplished his work early in the day, and with the hours that remained he was prodigally generous. Others again find their own work as much as they can do. They are worn out when it is finished. From such people less should be expected, but even they have something to give, and they ought to give it. Charles Dickens was one of the most generous of men, but I have no doubt that he shortened his life by his incessant readiness to answer every call. There are men of strong vitality who can endure the strain of continual callers, men who with a rush of geniality hurry one visitor out of the room and are ready for the next. Others again can only look helplessly at the stranger and wait with what courtesy is possible till he is pleased to go. There are many, I am sure, who would rather give away anything than their leisure. They are quite willing to part with what money they can spare, but their leisure—they covet it so much, they look forward to it with such anticipations. They have but a few hours perhaps in the week. These hours are more precious than gold. They are greedily longed for, the leisure in which they can write another chapter of that book which advances so slowly—in which they can do that bit of honest, serious hard reading—in which they can pay that long-de-

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ferred visit to the friend who is two hours away in London. When some men give their leisure they give it with a great if silent pang. But as Miss Whiting tells us, interruptions may be opportunities. May be,

CHAPTER XXVI

“ EHEU EVELINA ”

It is impossible to think of the Buried Romance of Life without remembering the love-story of the Antiquary. Mr. Oldbuck opened a door of a cabinet of his ancestor Aldobrand, and produced a bundle of papers tied with a black riband and labelled “Examinations, etc., taken by Jonathan Oldbuck, J.P., upon the 18th of February, 17—” ; a little under was written in a small hand “Eheu Evelina.” The tears dropped from the earl’s eyes as he endeavoured in vain to unfasten the knot which secured these documents. The story is immortal, and should be alive in the memory of every reader. Eveline Neville had been the pupil of Oldbuck more than twenty years before, and “her gentleness, her docility, her pleasure in the studies which I pointed out to her attached my affection more than became my age (though that was not then much advanced) or the solidity of my character. But I need not remind your lordship of the various modes in which you indulged your gaiety at the expense of an awkward and retired student embarrassed by the expression of feelings so new to him, and I have no

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doubt that the young lady joined you in the well-deserved ridicule—it is the way of womankind.” One is glad to know that the suspicion was ill-founded. “Let me say you do injustice to the memory of the gentlest and kindest as well as to the most unhappy of women to suppose she could make a jest of the honest affection of a man like you.” Eveline was the Antiquary’s first and only love, and when he lost her he became the narrowed, rugged, eccentric and somewhat penurious figure we know. But he remained a gentleman, and kept within him something of that sap of life which she had stirred in him long before.

George Eliot has given us a parallel in *Mr. Gilfil’s Love Story*. As Mr. Gilfil is introduced to us, he, like the Antiquary, was close-fisted, though the parsimony showed itself rather in the parsimony of his personal habits than in withholding help from the needy. He indulged in moderate potations of gin and water, his chat was slipshod, and his manners homely. He was most frequently to be found of an evening by the side of his own sitting-room fire smoking his pipe and imbibing his favourite mixture. He did not shine in the more spiritual functions of his office, and was content with a large heap of short sermons, rather yellow and worn at the edges, from which he took two every Sunday, securing perfect impartiality in the selection by taking them as they came without reference to topics. But there was a room in his home which his housekeeper

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had dusted and let the air upon four times a year for more than thirty years. In that room was the likeness of a girl, probably not more than eighteen, with small features, thin cheeks, a pale southern-looking complexion, and large dark eyes. “ Alas! alas! we poor mortals are often little better than wood ashes—there is small sign of the sap and the leafy freshness and the bursting buds that were once there. But whenever we see wood ashes we know that all that early fulness of life must have been. I at least hardly ever look at a bent old man or a wizened old woman but I see also with my mind’s eye that past of which they are the shrunken remnant, and the unfinished romance of rosy cheeks and bright eyes seems sometimes of feeble interest and significance compared with the drama of hope and love which has long ago reached its catastrophe, and left the poor soul like a dim and dusty stage with all its sweet curtain scenes and fair perspectives overturned and thrust out of sight.” “ Such was the locked-up chamber in Mr. Gilfil’s house: a sort of visible symbol of the secret chamber in his heart where he had long turned the key on early hopes and early sorrows, shutting up for ever all the passion and the poetry of his life.” He had lived with Tina for a few months of perfect happiness. She leaned entirely on his love, and found life sweet for his sake. Then she died, and his love went with her into deep silence for evermore. For himself, like the Antiquary, he was left with knots and rugged-

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ness, whimsical, odd, sometimes irritating; but the heart of him was sound and the grain was of the finest. "It is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches into which they were pouring their young life-juice the wounds will be healed over with some rough boss, some old excrescence, and what might have been a grand tree, expanding into liberal shade, is but a whimsical mistaken trunk."

Romance is buried in the most unlikely places. There is a fine touch in *Hypatia*. "He went on to my utter astonishment by such a eulogium on wedlock as I never heard from Jew or heathen, and ended by advice to young married folk so thoroughly excellent and to the point that I could not help telling him when he stopped what a pity I thought it that he had not himself married and made some good woman happy by putting his own recipes into practice. . . . And at that, Hypatia, I saw an expression on his face which made me wish for the moment that I had beaten out this impudent tongue of mine before I so rashly touched some deep old wound. . . . The man has wept bitter tears ere now, be sure of it." With this may go Mr. Simcox's beautiful lines:

"Forget-me-nots were blooming
Under the castle walls;
One said, 'They are forgotten
Who feasted in its halls.'
'And who would be remembered?"

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What is the use of fame?
A scholar cried; ‘ for glory
Is near akin to shame.’
Yet he too plucked the flowers,
And his pale face flushed hot,
And gave one to a lady,
And said, ‘ Forget-me-not.’

The lady in her cloister
Burnt her young heart away,
The scholar in his college
Grew deaf and dull and grey.
But when, they put the grave clothes
On each of them at last,
They found that each had cherished
A relic of the past.
With each of them was buried,
To ripen or to rot,
Deep underground for ages,
A blue forget-me-not.”

All the outward sign that is left may be a little packet of old letters kept in some hidden place. Best not to open them perhaps. To do so is to encounter one’s own past, to root up sorrows and griefs and blunders, to revive the old loves, to meet the ghosts of the dead and of one’s old self to make head as one best may against sudden shocks and surprises. Old letters have something akin to sleeping dogs and torpid snakes. Well, perhaps, also to avoid meetings if meetings are still possible. There is a curious passage in Mark Rutherford’s *Deliverance*: “ I begin to believe that a first love never dies. A boy falls in love at eighteen or nineteen. The attachment comes

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to nothing. It is broken off for a multitude of reasons, and he sees its absurdity. He marries afterwards some other woman whom he even adores, and he has children for whom he spends his life; yet in an obscure corner of his soul he preserves everlasting the cherished picture of the girl who first was dear to him. She too marries. In process of time she is fifty years old and he is fifty-two. He has not seen her for thirty years or more, but he continually turns aside into the little oratory to gaze upon the face as it last appeared to him when he left her at her gate, and saw her no more. He inquires now and then dimly about her when he gets the chance, and once in his life he goes down to the town where she lives solely in order to get a sight of her without her knowing anything about it. He does not succeed, and he comes back and tells his wife, from whom he never conceals any secrets, that he has been away on business." *He does not succeed*—Mark Rutherford has saved himself by that. Some have succeeded to their sorrow. When Rousseau went in 1754 to revisit the city of his birth, he turned aside in the road to visit her who had once been all the world to him. But he felt the shock of the changed reality. "He had not prepared himself by recalling the commonplace which we only remember for others, how time wears hard and ugly lines into the face that recollection at each new energy makes lovelier with an added sweetness." "I saw her," he says, "but in what a state, O God, in what debasement! Was

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this the same Madame de Warens in those days so brilliant to whom the priest of Pontverre had sent me? How my heart was torn by the sight!”

When we read the story in real life we find that the moral is the same. There is no evil, and there may be much good in the possession of an old romance provided that the memory of the dead does not weaken fidelity to the living. Johnson took about with him through all his changing life the letters of Molly Aston, and kept his promise that they should be the last things he would destroy. But the letters and all the memories bound up with them never weakened for an instant his abiding love for Tetty. I am not sure that it was so with Scott. When he writes in his diary “What a romance to tell!—and told I fear it will one day be, and then my three years of dreaming and my two years of wakening will be chronicled doubtless. But the dead will feel no pain.” Scott was a great gentleman, and doubtless he cherished and lamented the woman he married. But there are worlds of significance in such sentences as that of G. R. Gleig: “Lady Scott could never be a companion to him.”

We have the portrait of the lost love prefixed to the memoir of Principal Forbes of St. Andrews, and one cannot look at the somewhat hard features without wondering how it would have fared with Scott if his wishes had been fulfilled. It is difficult to regret the romance of his life, for Scott in arranging for the marriage of his son showed more

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shrewdness and more care for the good things of life than one altogether approves. But happily his own story has not been told fully, and the subject is eminently one to be treated charily. As for Swift, I am quite convinced that he never in any real sense loved Stella. No man could have loved her who wrote the poems which Swift addressed to her as the years went on. Nor do I believe that he loved Vanessa, though on this point there is more room for doubt.

One may say again that the peril of such romance as I have been writing about is that the dead and the living may be unfairly matched. Lockhart's lines

"When youthful faith is fled,
Of loving take thy leave;
Be faithful to the dead,
The dead cannot deceive,"

have their sting. The dead cannot err, cannot grow old. Everything that came short in them passes from the memory, and nought but the truth, the grace, the tenderness remain. As Mr. Morley admirably expresses it, "recollection at each new energy makes them lovelier with an added sweetness." The living have to bear the touches of time and travail, and they are near us. Shenstone's beautiful phrase in the epitaph on Miss Dolmon "Heu! quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse!" is translated by Byron:

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“ Yet how much less it were to gain
Though thou hast left me free,
The loveliest things that still remain
Than thus remember thee.”

Sometimes, in many natures the thought of the past is simply unnerving. Hawthorne has put this very well and truly in the closing page of the *Bliethdale Romance*. The narrator has lost his ideals, and lacks a purpose. “There is one secret—I have concealed it all along, and never meant to let the least whisper of it escape—one foolish little secret which probably may have had something to do with these inactive years of meridian manhood, with my bachelorship, with the unsatisfied retrospect that I fling back on life, and my listless glance towards the future. Shall I reveal it? It is an absurd thing for a man in his afternoon—a man of the world moreover—with three white hairs in his brown moustache, and that deepening track of a crow’s foot in each temple, an absurd thing ever to have happened, and quite the absurdest for an old bachelor like me to talk about. But it rises in my throat; so let it come. . . . I—I myself—was in love—with—Priscilla.”

For the great majority, however, I believe that the memory of a Buried Romance is softening and elevating. Life, as it goes on, tends to become so sordid, that the heart grows hard if it ceases to converse with the past. If a hopeless passion persists through a considerable part of life and embitters it, we have tragedy of the worst kind, and Mr. Hamerton truly

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says that the profounder students of human nature, like Scott himself, take the dangers of passionate love very seriously. Happily, in most cases the bitterness dies and the sweetness remains. Every gentler thought, every kinder deed, is a blossom cast on an unforgotten grave.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TRAGEDY OF FIRST NUMBERS

A FRIEND of mine has made a practice for many years of buying and collecting the first numbers of every new periodical. His gathering is an instructive and ghastly sight. If I could assemble the unfortunate persons, proprietors and editors, who were responsible for these ventures, and set forth their experiences, then indeed a tale would be unfolded. First numbers are very often tragical. After all the fuss has been gone through, after all the countless difficulties have been for the time surmounted, you have placed in your hands the first issue of your new paper. You are sick when you see it, and grow sicker with every page you turn over. The shortcomings, the blunders, the faults of every kind stand out with glaring and appalling clearness. If you could only have a chance of doing it all over again! But that chance does not come to you. Sometimes the feelings with which one regards the efforts of his friends are hardly less painful. There was a chance and so much depended on it, and now all is over.

For nowadays a thoroughly bad first number is practically beyond retrieval. Twenty years ago the

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projectors of new papers began low. They did not spend much on preliminary advertising; they were satisfied to print a moderate edition. Generally speaking their sales were small at the commencement. If there was a root of life in the journal it gradually became stronger. Subscribers increased, and in a year or so the corner might be turned without any very extravagant expenditure. In these times all that was wanted of a first number was that it should have some quality of freshness and strength. Nowadays you commence a new paper after a large preliminary expenditure sufficient to bring it thoroughly before the public you are aiming at. Perhaps £1000 is the least sum that can be spent, and I have known as much as £40,000 spent before the number appeared. If the money is used wisely, there is no fear about the sale of the first issue. What the next great development in journalism may be I do not know; I wish I did. But I am tolerably certain that the people are ready for a decisive alteration. This is proved by the eagerness which they show in purchasing first numbers. Again and again, of late, from 250,000 to 600,000 copies of new papers have been disposed of almost immediately. These numbers are eagerly scanned, but the trouble is that no second chance is given. If the numbers are disapproved of the purchaser does the paper all the harm he can by condemning it, and of twenty who buy the first number only one or two buy the second. What is to be done? In many cases the wisest thing would

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be to cut the loss at once. Pride, however, points another way, and the paper drags on and on, trying one desperate expedient after another, till a few more thousands are spent, and then there is a funeral with no mourners. The paper that was boomed and heralded passes away, and not even the paragraphist in difficulty bestows a single line upon it. This is tragedy. Perhaps there are fifty such tragedies every year in England.

Why are the first numbers usually so bad? It is a mystery. The ablest, the most brilliant, and the most experienced of journalists will turn out for you a first number so execrable in every respect that the humblest amateur journalist in a country town might be ashamed of it. I am measuring my words. Great firms with endless resources at their back will put out first numbers which are only seen to be at once condemned. There is a fatality about the first number. Among all the first numbers I recollect, and they are very many, I remember only two or three that could be called excellent. Some causes of failure may be suggested, but I do not profess to give anything like a complete or satisfactory account of the fact.

The idea of the paper may be wrong. Papers are started with a view to supply the particular needs of a particular class. It may turn out, it often does turn out, that the need exists only in the imagination of the projector, and has no correspondence with reality. Thus a well-known editor explained to me

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that he devised a journal which would interpret Belgravia to Brixton. It turned out that Brixton did not want to hear about Belgravia. It is still an undecided question whether women demand daily newspapers of their own. One experienced journalist of my acquaintance maintains that they do not, that they prefer to read the papers their husbands read, and that in a properly conducted daily journal the needs of both men and women ought to be met. Again, it may turn out that an idea suits a section of the public, but that this section is not strong enough to float a journal of its own.

Another case of failure is the want of unity in the contents of a paper. A good many years ago a six-penny weekly was started under very promising auspices. The editor secured articles from many brilliant contributors. If he had printed all the names of his writers it would have been admitted that few journals had ever commanded so powerful a team. But when the twenty articles appeared, it was felt that they did not make a paper, and there was general disappointment. The editor replied to complaints by giving the names of some of his contributors. The reply was not convincing. A weekly journal of opinion relying on anonymous contributions must maintain the same tone and style throughout. It is perhaps the highest achievement of an editor, the most convincing proof that he understands his business, when he is able to induce his contributors to write after a certain style. It was said

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by an eminent man, who wrote in the old days for both the *Saturday Review* and the *Spectator*, that he, unconsciously to himself, changed his style according as he was writing for the one or for the other. The old editors made great efforts after this unity, and led lives of strife with their staff. In order to secure the oneness they insisted on the right to change the articles of very eminent writers. The correspondence of Macvey Napier and Whitwell Elwin will show how resolutely this privilege was asserted, and how violently its exercise was resented. Nowadays, I think, there is very little of that. Whether articles are published anonymously or with signatures, they are published very much as they were sent in.

A journal may be approved page by page, and yet it may turn out when the pages are put together that something has gone badly wrong. This is a constant cause of failure, and it is more difficult perhaps to obviate than any other. A good paper is like a well arranged dinner. There should be substantial food and delicacies to tempt the appetite. It is not easy to attain the secret of combination. We may be quite sure that no paper will live long on a single feature, that its strength is in several features, each appealing more or less powerfully to readers. It is a matter of the greatest difficulty to find how each page and half-page may be turned to the best account. Many do not find out until after a series of costly experiments, and many never find out at all. But no journal is in a quite secure position if the

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filling up of any part of it, however small, is left to the chances of the moment.

I shall mention one other cause of failure, and only one. The fault may be not the editor's, but the publisher's. Though the editor has usually a share in fixing the style of production, the publisher is apt to assert his rights there. I have seen first numbers which were not amiss, so far as the literary contents were concerned, but they were spoiled by bad paper and unsatisfactory printing. Illustrations nowadays are worse than useless to a journal unless they are well produced. They cannot be well produced save under certain conditions. The paper must be of a quality fit to do them justice, and a rotary machine will only print illustrations satisfactorily if the paper is of a good class. There is nothing that gives a journal so cheap and hopeless a look as execrably printed blocks. While really popular journals cannot afford good paper, they should do their best. I had rather have sixteen pages on fairly good paper than twenty on a paper which makes the reading matter ugly or illegible. The smallest difference in the price per pound of paper makes all the difference in the world to journals with a large circulation, and publishers are constantly tempted to lower the quality of the paper they buy. They may thus frustrate all the efforts of their literary staff. If the protectionists have their way, and manage to raise the price of paper, it will be interesting to see the results on the cheap press in this country.

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Can anything be done to avert the misfortune of a first number? The only plan is to print specimen numbers before publication, and have them thoroughly and mercilessly criticised. A hundred pounds spent in this way may save thousands of pounds in the future. The cruellest critics do not care to point out his blunders to the unhappy man whose paper is already on the bookstalls, but when it is in the experimental stage it is a real kindness to point out the faults, and the wise projector will welcome the most severe attacks. It is only when you see your idea materialised that you are able properly to judge of it. You may see that while the project is not impracticable, it requires for its working out far more money, far more time, and far more ability than you had contemplated. Or you may see that the want you sought to supply is already met elsewhere. If you are wise, you will not be satisfied with your own opinion, nor even with what is called expert opinion. Try the paper on an average reader, and see what he or she says. This is not an infallible remedy against mistakes. A paper may be well turned out in every part, and an appeal to the public may show that it is not wanted. Also, while a paper working out an absolutely new and popular idea in journalism will succeed though badly done at first, a rival to it will have much more to confront, and will not succeed unless it is very clearly better than the journal it is more or less imitating. I cannot call to mind a single case where the original journal, well

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maintained, was killed by rivals, but I have known many cases where rivals managed to obtain a greater circulation, and to check the development of the parent journal, even if they did not reduce its strength.

I ought to say that a bad first number does not necessarily spell failure. There may be capital enough and brains enough to go on till the memory of the failure is wiped out, and the journal is successful. But even in that event it is probable that thousands and thousands of pounds have to be spent which if the start had been good might have been saved.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MR. E. H. HUTTON OF THE "SPECTATOR"

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ON September 9, 1897, Mr. Hutton succumbed to his long and painful illness. He died of an internal cancer, the presence of which was not certainly known till a comparatively short time ago. But in a letter written so lately as July he said that though doing his work he felt far from well, and did not anticipate many more years. From the nature of the malady he suffered much, but, happily, during the very last period he was comparatively free from pain, although not from great weakness. He bore all with characteristic and Christian resignation and quietness. It may well be supposed that the end was not unwelcome. For many years his wife, a very bright and gifted woman, suffered from severe melancholia. Mr. Hutton would not have her removed, and tenderly watched over her till she died. But his home was darkened. Mrs. Hutton never spoke, and only recognised her husband by showing signs of uneasiness when he came later from work than was his custom. When at last she passed away his illness rapidly increased. He was too weak to read letters or to say much, but showed an anxiety that no official biography of his

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career should be published, an anxiety which the *Spectator* has respected so far as to insert only a brief paragraph announcing his death. In every relation of life Mr. Hutton was noble and generous, and it is fit that others should say something of his stainless and influential career.

Richard Holt Hutton was born seventy-one years ago at Leeds, where his father, Dr. Joseph Hutton, was minister of the Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel. At this time the chapel, which has now been superseded by a new building, was attended by many of the leading families of the town. Dr. Hutton was an Irishman, and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. His father was a Unitarian minister in Dublin. He was in his day a considerable preacher, and greatly respected through his communion. His weakness in the pulpit is said to have been an irresistible tendency to weep on very little occasion. Mrs. Hutton was a decidedly able woman of intellectual tastes. Dr. Hutton was a thorough Unitarian, and followed the drift of his denomination in departing from the old and comparatively orthodox views. It is told of him that at a meeting of ministers, held to discuss prophecy some sixty or seventy years ago, he expressed the opinion that no prophecy, not even the fifty-third of Isaiah, had any reference to Jesus Christ. Dr. Hutton received a call to the now extinct chapel at Carter Lane, St. Paul's Churchyard, London. At that time some of the chief London Unitarian families attended—the Clarkes, the Law-

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rences, the Nettlefolds, the Chamberlains, and others. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's father was a leading member and a very pronounced Unitarian, while the present Secretary of State for the Colonies not only worshipped in the chapel but took an active part in its work. The building was inconveniently situated for the majority of the attendants, and Dr. Hutton ultimately resigned his charge, where he was succeeded by the Rev. Henry Solly, honourably known in literature and in philanthropic work. Richard Hutton was educated at the University College School and the University College, institutions much favoured by Unitarians until the scandalous episode of the rejection of Dr. Martineau for the Philosophical Chair took place. Dr. Martineau, I believe, lost the place by the absence of Henry Crabb Robinson, who was in Brighton, and who did not know the date of the election. Among Hutton's friends at the time were his future brother-in-law, William Caldwell Roscoe, who died early, but lived long enough to leave behind, perhaps, the very best critical essays that have been written since Hazlitt; Walter Bagehot, and others scarcely less gifted. One of Mr. Hutton's most characteristic writings was the memoir he prefixed to his brother-in-law's works issued posthumously, and he also wrote a too brief memoir of Bagehot. The young student was much influenced by some of his teachers, especially by that singularly able, though it is to be feared forgotten scholar, Professor Malden, on whom he wrote a striking arti-

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cle, and the brilliant and versatile Augustus de Morgan. He greatly distinguished himself as a student, took honours and the gold medal in philosophy with his degree of M.A. But perhaps the intellectual intercourse which he enjoyed with his compeers was even more stimulating. The Huttons lived at Hamilton Place, King's Cross, and Hutton himself has told us of the walks which he took with Bagehot, discussing all subjects, through the dreary chain of squares which led from University College to his home.

It is not to be wondered at that the young man, whose associations had all been with Unitarianism (Bagehot, and Roscoe, too, were of leading Unitarian families), should resolve to follow his father's career. He was educated for the Unitarian ministry at Manchester New College under two very able men, the Rev. J. J. Tayler and James Martineau. Martineau, who was twenty years older, became one of the great influences in his life, though he ultimately was far separated from his teacher's creed. In particular, Martineau's elaborate style of long sentences shaped Hutton's, and perhaps not for the best. Hutton never attained, and never tried to attain, that uniform, incessant, fatiguing brilliancy which in Martineau "makes you dig for dulness as for hid treasure." Though he had a marvellous command of English, and was perpetually hitting even to the last on happy and novel phrases, it cannot be denied that his writing often trails and lags, that he does not

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convey his thoughts lucidly, and that the best of him is usually to be got at a second perusal. He studied for short periods afterwards at two German universities, and learned to read German well, and to acquire a good knowledge of German criticism, especially the criticism of Baur, although he never went really deep into German thought.

And now came the period which I believe to have been the most determining in his life. He was a candidate for a Unitarian pulpit, and he failed in his quest. To use the Scottish phrase, he was a probationer who did not get a church, and who became "a stickit minister." He may have been offered a sphere of labour, although I doubt it, but never was offered any adequate sphere, and though he supplied pulpits here and there, nothing came of it. Some papers have said that he was settled at Gloucester as Unitarian minister. This is not so. His brother for a time occupied the pulpit there. Old Unitarians have reminiscences of his sermons, in particular of one on the significance of the word "Christopher," which he preached up and down the country. Perhaps the reason of his failure was that he was shortsighted, and read his sermons with some difficulty. His discourses are also said, and probably with truth, to have been difficult and heavy. In any case he failed, and relinquished the profession, and as we shall see later on, this failure coloured his whole thought of the churches and of religion. It may be mentioned that for a brief period he edited the Unitarian paper called

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the *Inquirer*, but I fancy this was play more than anything else. At least he was in the habit of talking as if it were.

The next episode in his career was his marriage to Miss Roscoe, sister of W. C. Roscoe, and one of the famous Liverpool family. She is remembered as a singularly sweet and gracious woman. He obtained the Principalship of University Hall, in succession, if I am not mistaken, to Clough, with whom he was on very friendly terms; and all seemed to go well with him. He continued to be a Unitarian, though he had relinquished preaching, and with his young wife attended the preaching of Mr. Solly in Carter Lane Chapel.

Then came perhaps the most trying time of his life. He fell into bad health. Consumption was threatened, and he was ordered by the doctors to go out to the West Indies. He resigned the Principalship of University Hall, and went out with Mrs. Hutton. The change was very beneficial to him, but Mrs. Hutton caught yellow fever and died. The blow was crushing. His brother-in-law came out and brought him home. When he had recovered a little from his deep dejection, he found himself almost without resource, but was able to contribute a little to Unitarian periodicals like the *Prospective Review*, took chambers at Lincoln's Inn, and began to read for the Bar. Then followed the great change which permanently altered the complexion of his life. One day Mr. Maurice happened to remark to Mr. Solly,

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who was visiting him, that the best article on his theological essays had appeared in the *Prospective Review*, and that he greatly wished to know the author. Mr. Solly immediately told him that the essay was by Mr. Hutton, and offered to introduce them. He went over to Hutton's chambers, found him out, but gave the message to his brother, and Hutton immediately called on Maurice. This was the beginning of an unusually strong and lasting friendship. Under its influence Mr. Hutton soon became a member of the Church of England, a devoted member, and perhaps more and more devoted as life went on. He was married again to a cousin of his former wife—also a Miss Roscoe—and found congenial employment in the editorship of a new quarterly, the *National Review*. When it was started the days of the quarterlies were passing away, and the periodical never paid its expenses. But in my judgment, and I have read almost every word of it, no such excellent review has ever been published in England. The very best writings of Hutton, Roscoe, Greg, Martineau, and many others, appeared in it. Whatever the nomenclature may have been—and every journalist knows that does not amount to much—Hutton was the real editor, and the life of the periodical. He showed there that he possessed the editorial faculty. He was not only able to write himself, but he knew what subjects were vital, and he knew how to choose and rule his men. Although I have no positive evidence of the fact, I strongly sus-

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pect that he had his difficulties with Lady Byron, who found the money, or at least much of the money, necessary for the carrying on of the periodical. About Lady Byron Mr. Hutton was noticeably reticent, but once or twice he permitted himself to say something of her character. He seems to have found her much as she is described in *Medora Leigh*, a good woman, with generous impulses, but capricious and unreliable. Through her Mr. Hutton became acquainted with various notable persons—Mr. A. J. Scott, of whom he spoke as a truly prophetic man, but indolent and unbusiness-like; A. J. Ross, the clever Presbyterian minister at Brighton, who was deposed for heresy; George Macdonald, and others. I am not sure whether he personally knew Frederick Robertson, who was on intimate terms with Lady Byron, but he has spoken of Robertson as the best of theologians, better even than Maurice, although his influence on Hutton was nothing like so deep as that of Maurice and Newman. One of the features of the *National Review*, which was very prophetic of the *Spectator*, was the short comments on new books at the end. It is from the *National Review* that his two volumes of theological and literary essays are reprinted. They were first published on the suggestion of Mr. Strahan, and are now included in Messrs. Macmillan's Eversley Series. I have always thought Hutton spoiled all his republications by turning "we" into "I," and by cutting out remorselessly the more brilliant and audacious bits. The essays

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were not written for book publication, but for anonymous publication, and they ought certainly to have been left in the original form. As every one knows, they are very stately productions, and some of them made a deep mark. Professor Drummond said that the essay on Goethe was the best critical piece that had been written in this century, a judgment with which I cannot agree, though certainly the paper has great merits both of style and thought. Another piece, which almost gave a nickname, was that on "The Hard Church," an attack on Henry Rogers, which was by no means without justification. But some of the best essays have never been reprinted. In particular there was one on Lord Lytton the younger, which was a gem in its way. For the Lyttons, father and son, Mr. Hutton had a profound contempt. He detested them for their display of Parisian diamonds, and he never did justice to the very great and various powers of the senior. The income from the *National Review* was not very large, and Mr. Hutton supplemented it by teaching mathematics to young ladies in Bedford College. He was much liked by his pupils, and made a successful teacher, though his frequent attacks of giddiness made the work somewhat irksome.

All this time he had been in training for his true place, which came to him strangely. He was thirty-five or thirty-six, in the very prime of his vigour, and looking out anxiously for a suitable sphere. Mr. Meredith Townsend, who had been successful as a

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journalist in India, but had suffered there from severe bereavement, resolved to come to this country and buy a paper. He relinquished the *Friend of India* and purchased the *Spectator*. He went on with the journal for six months single-handed, and then found it was too much for him. He consulted that well-known Indian politician, Mr. Wilson, the father-in-law of Bagehot, and Wilson told him he knew the very man. His recommendation of Hutton was accepted by Townsend. Thus began a very close, remarkable, and influential alliance, which was even strengthened as time went on, and which only death has broken. So close was it that I believe that sometimes one would begin an article and the other would finish it. Each learned from each, save that Mr. Townsend's writings never took a profound religious tone. The only difference that ever occurred between them was when Mr. Hutton became more and more of a High Churchman. When Hutton came on the *Spectator* his place had to be created. Religion had never been prominent in the journal, but Hutton at once began to preach, and he preached to a great and listening and picked audience until he died. His friend Maurice agreed with Mr. Spurgeon in thinking that no ministerial position is equal in importance to that of a man who can collect and hold a constituency which will read his religious instruction. He very greatly rejoiced in the opportunity that had at last presented itself to his friend and disciple.

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Something ought to be said of the position in which Townsend and Hutton found the *Spectator*. That journal was started by a very able Scotsman, Robert Stephen Rintoul. Rintoul was editor of the *Dundee Advertiser* about 1813, and he was certainly a born editor. At the very beginning of his career he elevated the compilation of a newspaper into an art. The selection, condensation, and classification of news and discussions in each successive issue was carefully studied with a view to make the paper complete and attractive as a whole. To attain this end he on one occasion actually rewrote the whole contents of a number of his journal. He had Thomas Chalmers as one of his contributors, and acquired a position of great influence. In 1828 he came to London, and after he had made some unsuccessful attempts to establish a paper his friends raised the funds for the *Spectator*, the most prominent of them being William Dixon of Govan. The first number appeared in 1828, and from that date to the day of his death his history was the history of his journal. Rintoul fought for parliamentary reform, for the extension of the franchise, the shortening of the duration of Parliaments, and the ballot. He was a coadjutor of Rowland Hill in his Post Office ideas, and was a great advocate of systematic colonisation. He fought also most efficiently for the Anti-Corn-Law League, and though in the end of the day he did not achieve a very great pecuniary success, he was otherwise successful. Rintoul died in 1858, and I believe that Thornton

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Hunt then appeared on the scene. For some time before his death Rintoul had ceased to do much of his work. It is usually said that the *Spectator* sank into utter futility during the interregnum, but this is not true. A great and successful effort was made to improve it. In particular Leigh Hunt—then near the end of his career—was secured as a contributor, and wrote under the heading of "The Occasional" some valuable though very little known articles, the most noticeable of which is the account of Edmund Ollier, the publisher of Shelley and Keats. They were his very last writings. The series is not to be neglected by any student of literary history. The *Spectator* was then largely a newspaper, and the news, and particularly the foreign news, was much improved. The time, however, had now come for a reorganisation, and gradually Messrs. Hutton and Townsend considerably altered the character of the paper. They discarded news and parliamentary reports, gave a chronicle of the week, and made the rest of the paper articles and reviews. They did far more than this. They shot their individuality through every part of it. Two such rich and complex personalities have perhaps never been associated with any paper, and the singular accordance of their views turned their union to the best possible account. But undoubtedly the first great change was the introduction of the religious element. This was done pronouncedly. Books in particular were reviewed from the ethical and religious standpoint. And the same

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principle was applied to politics. In fact, at one time Frederick Maurice had a department of the *Spectator* all to himself. Journalists often forget that they are writing for a baptized people, but the editors of the *Spectator* did not, and have had their reward. Everywhere supporters rallied round them, and the fortunes of their journal underwent a total change. It ought to be said, however, that Rintoul's mark is on it even now—in appearance, in arrangement, and, above all, in a certain decorous moderation of tone.

From the first the paper under the new *régime* was uncompromisingly Anglican. It has often been the subject of amazement to Nonconformists that a paper, one of whose editors was brought up in Nonconformity, and was a Nonconformist minister, should treat them with a steady hostility, and not only with hostility, but with almost lack of understanding. That Mr. Gladstone should not understand Nonconformists is more intelligible, though he was originally a Presbyterian. But that Mr. Hutton should never—I use the word advisedly—all those years say one sympathetic or kind word about Nonconformity is difficult to understand, were it not that I know his career. He was "a stickit minister," and his whole estimate of British Dissent was based on that fact. I do not mean, of course, that he resented his failure. He was infinitely above such paltriness. No man was freer from envy or jealousy, and, indeed, one has sometimes found "stickit ministers" most

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faithful and devoted adherents of the churches that could find no use for them. But he argued that if there was no room for his ministry in Dissent, there must be something wrong, and he was perhaps entitled to argue in that manner. He did not like to write about Dissent at all, or to speak of it, but now and then he gave glimpses of his true mind. For example, in writing about his father's successor at Mill Hill, Leeds, the late Rev. Charles Wicksteed, he said that "the Dissenting minister has to appeal to the suffrages of the congregations, to preach as a candidate, and to pit his talent against a number of other men, presumably his equals and possibly his superiors, and he cannot be blamed if he is filled with a desire to surpass them when a wider sphere of influence is to be attained." This created an urgent temptation for the Dissenting minister to shine as a preacher, resulting in "the love of effect and admiration, and a tendency rather to express the vein of thought and feeling recognised as proper for the occasion than to follow without self-analysis the direction of the unbiassed mind." I could quote other passages equally relevant, but this is sufficient. Mr. Hutton had not a few Dissenters first and last as his contributors, but he very rarely allowed them to say a word for their brethren or their cause. Even when hardest pressed, as by the demands of the Scottish Disestablishers, the utmost he would do was to allow James Macdonell to say something in their favour. For a little time he wavered about Welsh Disestab-

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lishment, but ultimately opposed it stoutly. This hatred for and distrust of the Christian democracy led him to Erastianism. He would rather have a civil court decide anything religious or not religious than an ecclesiastical court. Yet the Dissenters read him most humbly and patiently. They bore all things from him, as they bore all things from Mr. Gladstone. Week by week they kissed the rod, and made as though they liked it. In one of Mr. Barrie's early sketches he amusingly described the travels of a copy of the *Spectator* from manse to manse. Mr. Hutton was well aware of all this, but it did not alter either his convictions or his feelings. At the beginning he was much out of temper with the predominant party in the English Church, but as time went on the paper became as churchy as the *Guardian*, and with all the fairness of the editors it never was possible for them to get further than that Dissenters had a right to toleration, that is, that they should be exempted from direct persecution.

The politics of the *Spectator* were for long soundly Liberal, the question of Disestablishment being reserved. The first struggle it went through was on the Civil War in America, when it took the side of the North. Mr. Gladstone, it will be remembered, was in the opposite camp, and declared that Jeff Davis had made a nation. The battle cost the *Spectator* much, for Society was overwhelmingly against it, but in the end it conquered and made good its losses. Gradually the paper became more and more Glad-

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stonian, though not blind to Mr. Gladstone's faults. Between Mr. Hutton and Mr. Gladstone there was for a long time a somewhat intimate friendship, and his admiration of the great statesman's character knew no bounds. One of the very few cases in which he allowed himself to engage in a personal controversy was when Mr. Louis Jennings made a bitter personal attack on Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Hutton replied with unusual warmth. By this time he had severed his relations with Mr. Gladstone owing to the Home Rule question, but all the more on this account he felt it necessary to assert his conviction of the honesty, the humility, and the self-sacrifice of his old leader. Still, Mr. Hutton was not blind, and perhaps the most felicitous expression ever used to describe Mr. Gladstone is his, "A Highlander of genius." As is well known, when the Home Rule question came on, the *Spectator* took a chief part in opposing the movement. The paper was remarkable for its shrewd estimates of politicians. Though it disliked Mr. Chamberlain's Dissenting zeal, it was never for a moment blind to his great power and to his certain place of predominance. It hailed Mr. Asquith at first, but grew colder to him later. It prophesied Sir Henry Fowler's place in the Liberal party. One of Mr. Hutton's chief personal antipathies was to Mr. Labouchere, an antipathy expressed more strongly in private than in public. In conversation it was once said to him, "You live near Mr. Labouchere?" "Yes," he replied significantly,

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"within a stone's-throw." Although the *Spectator* has supported the Government, it took the side of Greece when other journals, formerly conspicuous in the battle for freedom, betrayed the cause. The *Spectator*, notwithstanding many things to disquiet, held fast to the faith that the heart of the nation cannot be crushed down by appeals addressed to its pockets and its fears.

I cannot fully trace the gradual change in Mr. Hutton's theology. From Unitarianism he passed to Mauricianism, and from Mauricianism he passed to High Churchism, and it was thought would pass to Rome. I believe, however, that he died a very decided Protestant, though the spell of Dr. Newman grew stronger and stronger with the passage of time. The transition from Mauricianism to High Churchism was not so unnatural as it might seem. Maurice always repudiated the name Broad Churchman. And Mr. Hutton had no sympathy with the ways of those who distilled a residuum of meaning from the Scriptures and pretended that this was what was intended by the writer. He disliked the bleached paraphrases which certain Broad Churchmen make of the most passionate words of Scripture. He was always aiming at vital force and original freshness. He craved for reality, for a fresh comprehension of the living powers of religion. Evangelicalism he disliked, misunderstood, and caricatured. He called it "spiritual greediness." At first he had a great deal to say against eternal punishment, but he came to see that

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something constructive was wanted, something profounder and more impressive than criticism can furnish; and it is not altogether surprising that, situated as he was, he found it in the High Church party. It is true that in the preface to the second edition of his theological essays, he writes against both the High Church party and the Church of Rome. But this was composed in 1876, and cannot be said to represent his final opinion. In his early days on the *Spectator* he was denounced by Canon Liddon, but by the end the vehement preacher was his close ally and contributor. Mr. Hutton did his greatest service in the years when Huxley and Tyndall were in their plenitude of power. He was an adversary that could not be ignored or despised, and week by week he maintained unflinchingly the cause of a spiritual faith.

Mr. Hutton, I have said, was a real editor, and made his paper interesting. The excellent summary of the week was always one of the best bits of journalism accomplished in Britain, and there was nothing elsewhere of its kind. He did much less than might have been expected to get able coadjutors. One of his early finds was Mr. Swinburne, some of whose *Poems and Ballads*, strange to say, made their appearance first in the *Spectator*—among them *Faustine*. Mr. Swinburne also wrote prose, and on one occasion produced an article on Victor Hugo so inordinately long that it had to appear in three parts. But the alliance was not one of a kind that could con-

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tinue, and Mr. Swinburne's later aberrations found few severer critics than his late editor, the article on Swinburne's literary papers being as trenchant an essay as Mr. Hutton ever wrote. For the literary department, of which he had the control, he usually selected safe, rather than brilliant critics. He was good-natured about giving young beginners a chance, young pupils of Bedford College and others, and the result was that the *Spectator* reviews were sometimes below the mark. Nevertheless he so stamped his own personality on them that they were more valued by publishers than perhaps any others. He was an admirable critic, not widely read, but a brooding student of the best authors. Trollope had in him one of his most appreciative reviewers, and he was first to detect the authorship of *Nina Balakta*. Arnold and Tennyson were among the many who owned their obligations to him, and the delight with which he hailed the appearance of Mr. William Watson will not be forgotten. He had curious prejudices, and an ethical dislike with him was almost impossible to overcome. For example, he persistently depreciated George Meredith's novels, maintaining throughout that Meredith was essentially a coarse and affected though clever writer. Sir William Hardman has left on record the impression produced on Meredith by one of his reviews. Perhaps the great secret of his success was that he poured his whole soul into his life as a journalist. He did one thing, and only one. He contributed very little to other periodicals

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than his own. His books, with few exceptions, were reprints. He wrote for Mr. John Morley's series a monograph on Scott. He also wrote a little book on Cardinal Newman—good and suggestive, but hardly worthy of him.

Although he disliked public appearances, Mr. Hutton on various occasions made speeches. The most notable of these was one in connection with a presentation to Dr. Martineau. He also contributed papers more than once to the Church Congress. The one accessible glimpse into his private life is to be found in a delightful anonymous volume, *Holiday Rambles of a Wife and her Husband*. This was a really remarkable example of Mr. Hutton's versatility. The brightness and vivacity of the lady's contributions contrast noticeably with the graver and more burdened style of her husband. But all the letters were from the same hand.

CHAPTER XXIX

JAMES PAYN

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IF liking and gratitude are qualifications for writing about a man, if knowledge of his works is a qualification, I should be able to write about James Payn. I think it is a bold thing to say, and yet I will hazard it, that I have read every one of his hundred books, and read many of them more than once. From him I first received encouragement in literature, and yet it seems impossible to say much about him, so many thoughts and memories crowd into the mind. A more gracious and charming figure has not appeared in literature since Sir Walter Scott died, and though he worked very hard and seemed to be content with his rewards, such as they were, he never had justice done to him. Now that he is dead, his biographers, as a rule, have had very little to tell of him, save what he gave them in his own two volumes of *Reminiscences*. Even these volumes are not at all full, and not even quite trustworthy, as will be perceived by any careful reader who will compare them. The real materials for James Payn's history are to be found in the volumes of *Chambers's Journal* during the years of his editorship, which commenced in 1858 and

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ended on the death of Robert Chambers about 1871. All his best work is to be found there. In his later years he broke out in one or two new directions, but upon the whole he kept repeating the stories and the facts which had done their duty so well during his connection with *Chambers's*.

James Payn was born at Cheltenham in 1830, the son of a gentleman residing at Maidenhead, who was clerk to the Thames Commissioners, and who, although disinherited by a wealthy father, was able to send his son to Eton, Woolwich, and Cambridge. The boy was delicate and clever, but somewhat perverse, or rather individual, in his tastes. He hated school life. He had a very poor opinion of boys. He used to maintain that what attracted them in novelists like Fielding and Smollett was simply the indecency, and he believed that there was no limit to their cruelty. Being very clever, James Payn was able to take a fairly good place. He passed third at the entrance examination at Woolwich, but he was never interested in the routine work either of school or college; in fact, he looked upon the education communicated there as a huge fraud, and never ceased to denounce it as ineffectual for the purposes of life. He busied himself, however, in other directions, indulged his literary tastes, spoke as a debater at the Union, where he figured as a strong Radical, and acquired the friendship of men like W. G. Clark, whose wit he greatly admired. Clark, by the way, published a volume of sermons, which I possess, but

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afterwards, if I am not mistaken, abandoned religious belief. While at the University, Mr. Payn managed to get a volume of poems published. They were entitled *Stories from Boccaccio*, and they received a friendly word from George Brimley in the *Spectator*. Payn professed to be indifferent to reviews, but in reality nobody that I ever knew of cared so much about them. In his Reminiscences he speaks with the most effusive gratitude of Brimley's criticism as "like ten thousand tonics in a single dose." He was easily pleased. All that Brimley says is, "There is much promise and some performance in this little volume of poems. . . . With a fresh incident of domestic life placed in appropriate scenery, or with a topic suggestive of an unhackneyed strain of thought, Mr. Payn produces a little poem of interest and freshness. When he selects a theme already worn by use, though the skill of the treatment or the merit of the verses is just the same, the piece, if not commonplace, is comparatively flat." Imagine what a young poet in these days would say to such a criticism! But perhaps authors were modest then. He published another volume of poems later, but the truth is he was not a poet, although within his limits one of the surest judges of poetry I have ever known.

Gradually, in fact very quickly, he established a connection with literature, and having just enough to live upon apart from his gains, he got married, whenever he took his degree, to Miss Louisa Adelaide Edlin, a step which he always considered the wisest

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in his life. Miss Edlin's brother, Sir Peter, was much tried by the halfpenny evening newspapers some time ago. James Payn at that time was young, and younger in spirit even than his years. To the last he envied youth, and mourned over the passing of the years. Dignities and gains brought no compensation for what time took away. His heroes and heroines are almost always youthful. As Mr. Barrie said years ago, "The noble youths of *Lost Sir Masingberd* are noble at seventeen. Indeed, it is noticeable that Mr. Payn likes to catch his heroes and heroines young. None over twenty need apply. I was reading *Less Black than we are Painted* lately, and found a hero and heroine engaged to be married—a serious affair even in later life—at the age of sixteen and a half. When the story ends they are married at twenty-one—they have gone through every experience, they have settled down to spend the few remaining years of life quietly, a broken-down married man and woman of the world. If all Mr. Payn's heroes could be gathered together and a schoolmaster then introduced who said, 'Gentlemen, we shall now resume our studies,' the effect would, no doubt, be remarkable." After his marriage he had a time of ideal happiness in Lakeland. Through his father he had come to know Miss Mitford, in whose letters he figures largely, and though he never took any notice of the fact, not always to his advantage. He was remarkably handsome at this time, and conscious of it, but his high spirits and genial humour

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made him a general favourite. Miss Mitford introduced him to Harriet Martineau, for whom he had a strong affection, and he made the acquaintance of Dr. Arnold's children, including Matthew and William. He kept busily contributing to *Household Words* and *Chambers's Journal*, and in a comparatively short time went to Edinburgh as joint editor of *Chambers's* with Mr. Leitch Ritchie. Thus began what was incomparably the most important section of his life work. He had able associates in Edinburgh. Leitch Ritchie was no mean writer. There is a quiet beauty about his story, *Wearyfoot Common*, which takes one back to it again and again. Robert Chambers was in full vigour and happiness with his large family circle, presided over by the bravest and sunniest of wives, "Mrs. Balderstone." Robert Chambers was a man in many respects akin to Payn, with a keen sense of humour, an eager interest in literature, a quiet contempt for many of the conventions accepted in the city he moved in. But the strongest man there was William Chambers, and if Payn could be said to detest any one, and certainly he was a good hater, he detested William. Curiously enough, he was always of opinion that the whole success of the Chambers was due to Robert. There is no need to put one above another, but as a matter of fact William had qualities which made for success, and which were possessed neither by Robert Chambers nor by James Payn. He understood what the people liked. He had a strong will and an indomitable per-

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severance, and in spite of what Payn says, a considerable literary faculty. If anybody doubts this, let him read the little book on William and Robert Chambers. An Englishman, a public schoolman, a University man, a clubman, a humourist, James Payn found himself utterly out of tune with Edinburgh society. He hardly made the most of what was open to him. Lord Neaves, for example, was a very clever man, but when writing about him and Lord Deas in the *Cornhill*, Payn spoke of them as Neaves and Deaves, evidently thinking them persons whose names were not worth spelling rightly. He resented the small regard paid to literary men not otherwise endowed, the ridiculous respect, as he considered it, for professors, the undervaluing of such men as Alexander Smith. For the religion of Scotland, and especially for the hypocritical part of it, he had a profound loathing. The climate did not suit him, and his wife and children were delicate. He had a legend of a four-wheeled cab being blown over in the Edinburgh streets. Nevertheless he went on assiduously with his work, though his name for long did not emerge into the general knowledge. After some years he joyfully returned to edit the *Journal* from London when Robert Chambers made his move there. He took up his abode in the comfortable but modest house in Maida Vale, which he occupied till his death, became a member of the Reform Club, and entered with eager zest into the literary life of London. With society he had no concern. He went to bed

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every night at ten, his habits were perfectly regular, and he made no intimates of people who could not talk about books. In his earlier days, however, he explored pretty thoroughly some of the obscurer regions of London life, and had strange stories to print of them, and stranger yet that never got into print.

What shall I say of his work in *Chambers's*? Never, to my thinking, did an editor do better work. Never was a periodical more eagerly welcomed by me month by month, than *Chambers's* under his editorship. What Mr. Barrie said about him was perfectly right. "If I were an American millionaire, and could afford to keep a novelist of my own, I would first offer the appointment to Mr. Payn. No brighter, shrewder, manlier writer touches paper. His very name puts one in good humour like the sound of the dinner gong." There was nothing in his paper that he did not do well. He wrote most of the stories, short and long; he had a remarkable eye for poetry, and his record of magazine verse far excels that of any other editor. He was a good critic, and could do justice to authors who were unpopular like William Barnes, for whom he had a fervent and discerning admiration. Nobody could pick out with more skill the good points of a dull book, and make an entertaining article of them. He could describe, he could write biography, and, above all, he could moralise in the most charming manner on life, illustrating his observations by innumerable delightful anecdotes. The essays which began each

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weekly number of *Chambers's* were nearly all from his pen, and I cannot even yet understand why they are so little appreciated. Yet, strange to say, although there were spurts, as when *Lost Sir Massingberd* was published, the circulation of *Chambers's Journal* began to decline under him, and went down so alarmingly that, if I am not mistaken, it became an absolute necessity to resort to a complete change of policy. Accordingly, Payn was dismissed, much to his indignation. William Chambers filled the paper with his own contributions, and it rapidly recovered its old place in public favour. It is easy to say that this simply showed that the public preferred bad work, but this is not true. Some of the shrewdest literary people I knew in Scotland at that time expressed their delight that Payn had been got rid of.

What is the explanation? It is worth while to ask, because it will help us to understand why Payn, with all his outstanding merits, was never quite an outstanding man, always in the second rank and never near the first. To begin with the proprietors made a great error in binding him to write for no periodical but *Chambers's*. The consequence was that he wrote too much, although if he had been able to vary his style this would not have mattered. He could not vary it, however. He wrote always as a clubman, as a man of the world, as a humorous, and occasionally sardonic writer. He was good-natured, but once said that Abraham Lincoln was endeared to him for ever by saying, when he was beset by place-

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hunters, that he was glad he had got smallpox, because it was something he could give to everybody. Lincoln's rebuke to a patriot also pleased him hugely. "I have found, Siree, that those people who are so precious ready to spill *the last drop of their blood* are extraordinarily careful about spilling the *first drop*." Humour, though a precious faculty in moderation, is a very dangerous one. Sardonic humour is absolutely fatal. Mr. Payn had a fondness for sensational plots, or rather, he believed that they fetched the public. But his humour was often too much for him, and you could see him visibly grinning at his own sensations. He could make love heartily enough, but Mr. Barrie keenly remarked that there, too, he could not keep serious. "When he comes to his love passages the brackets are thicker than ever, as if he must find some vent for his humour or die, and he rather shirks telling how much longer Herbert (17) held the hand of Christina (16) than was absolutely necessary. He is given to leaving the proposal to the reader's imagination, and if he faces it, he is in higher spirits than ever next chapter, like one exulting because he has got it over." He made a great success by *Lost Sir Massingberd*, the story of a man who disappeared in a tree. He followed it up by another novel in which a young gentleman commits murder. The idea occurs to some of his friends to plead insanity. The counsel for the defence does so by reading the best poem Payn ever wrote. "Gentlemen of the jury, we have caused

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twelve copies of this most extraordinary production to be printed, which will be placed in your hands, lest you may imagine that any latent meaning in the verses may have escaped you from my delivery of them." The speaker goes on at great length, and the jury return a unanimous verdict of not guilty. When Payn did such things as that his readers began to feel that he was laughing at them, and resolved to give him a wide berth thereafter. People of his own class and culture, on the other hand, laughed at his sensationalism, even when he did not wish them to laugh, and on that account no sort of justice was done to his real qualities. The consequence is that he fell between two stools, never thoroughly gaining either the cultured class or the general public. No doubt his books, many of them, had a large circulation, but this circulation, I suspect, steadily fell off, although his work did not deteriorate. Indeed, one of his last productions, *The Disappearance of George Driffel*, is as good in its way as anything he ever wrote. But he sold at the most by thousands when others were selling by tens of thousands. It must be acknowledged, too, that he had no distinction of style, and no real pathos. It may be doubted whether he ever made a reader cry. And yet what a store of entertainment, of brightness, of wisdom and of wit is to be found in his innumerable pages!

Mr. Payn became literary adviser to Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co., the most notable events of this connection being the discovery of *Vice Versa* and the

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rejection of *John Inglesant*. He knew good work as few did. The reader has been always safe with any book of fiction bearing the imprint of Smith, Elder and Co. Later on he became editor of the *Cornhill*, which was turned into a sixpenny, but did not achieve much success. He began well with the idea of making a readable magazine, but was bullied by the critics into the old style—two slabs of a serial, one at the beginning, the other at the end, one or two short stories, an article on Coral, another on the Antibes, and the periodical did no good. He wrote much in the *Times*, especially to which he contributed reviews of novels. I have seen it said that Payn never wrote unfavourable notices. It is not true. He was a very kindly critic, and did not attack where he was not provoked, but, as he said himself, he was in the habit of paying off those who attacked him, giving them as good as he got. I could tell some extraordinary and, indeed, almost incredible stories of these. In the end of the day he was generally even with people. He spoke very kindly of his contemporaries, but looked back to Dickens and Thackeray. For Dickens he had a profound veneration amounting almost to idolatry, but he was never induced to write down what may be called the secrets of his intercourse with “the master.” His social essays appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* and elsewhere, and were always suggestive. As the years went on, and ill-health increased, the profound melancholy which is in most true humourists

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developed itself very strongly. I think the first explicit declaration of this appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* in 1879, in a paper called *The Midway Inn*, where he said that the desire to be out of it all increased till old age is no longer looked forward to; that there the attractions of the place are dying out like those of Bath and Cheltenham. The middle-aged are so weary, that if the choice were in their hands, and affected only themselves, they would rather avoid long life.

This mood grew with him, and found poignant expression in a paper called *The Backwater of Life*. It began very early, and I will quote the poem which in his story is used to prove insanity as proof of this. It is really one of the most characteristic things the author ever wrote:—

“When the doors have closed behind us, and the voices died
away,
Do the singers cease their singing, and the children end their
play?
Do the words of wisdom well no more through the calm
lips of age?
Are the fountains dried whence the young draw hopes too
deep for the faith of the sage?
And, like the flower that closes up when the east begins to
glow,
Doth the maiden's beauty fade from off her tender cheek
and brow?
Are they all but subtle spirits changing into those and these,
To vex us with a feigned sorrow, or to mock us while they
please?
All this world a scene phantasmal, shifting aye to something
strange,

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Such as, if but disenchanted, one might mark in act to
change.
See the unembodied beings that we hold of our own kind,
Friend and foe, and kin and lover, each a help to make us
blind,
Set to watch our lonely hours, ambushing about our path,
That our eyes may never open till their lids are closed in
death;
And when so closed, will these things be as though we had
ne'er been born,
And e'en without those tears which are dried swift as the
dews by the morn,
That makes us feel these fancies more, so strange doth it
appear,
How the memory of a dead man dies with those he held
most dear,
As though there was an end, with life, of the mockery that
beguiles,
Our every act, tricks out our woes, and cheats us of our
smiles,
And makes to love, and scorn, and hate, and parts and
reconciles."

CHAPTER XXX

DR. GEORGE MACDONALD

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DR. GEORGE MACDONALD died on September 18th at his son's residence near Ashstead, Surrey. He was nearly eighty-one years of age. For a considerable time his mind has been darkened. He was almost always silent, and his memory was gone, but he was apparently peaceful and free from pain, and he had the watchful and devoted tending of his children. It is no matter for tears, but rather for songs of praise, that his beautiful spirit has passed from moonlight and dreamlight and darkness into full and everlasting daylight. The prayer of his youth has been answered at last—

“God give us heaven. Remember our poor hearts.
We never grasp the zenith of the time;
We find no spring except in winter prayers.”

I

George Macdonald was born at Huntly, 'Aberdeenshire, in 1824. His grandfather, Charles Edward Macdonald, was born just before the battle of Culloden, and was named after the Pretender, whom his family ardently followed. They took refuge after

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the fight in Portsoy, and hid for months in caves on the seacoast. They were descended from fugitives who escaped the massacre of Glencoe. Charles Edward Macdonald was educated at the famous Fordyce school, and married Isabella Robertson of Huntly, whom her grandson afterwards made immortal as Mrs. Falconer. He took up the bleaching business, and was also agent of the Aberdeen Bank at a salary of £20. Isabella Robertson was brought up in an atmosphere considered severe even at that time. She was allowed to learn reading, but writing was forbidden, "for fear she should write to the lads." At the time of her marriage the young couple attended the Parish Church, which was allowed to remain in an extraordinarily neglected condition. One day the snow lay in the church some inches deep, and Mrs. Macdonald was so incensed that she went to the church of Mr. George Cowie, who was expelled from the Secession for allowing the Haldanes to preach for him, and became perforce an Independent minister, the minister of the "Missionar Kirk" which sent forth so many preachers and teachers. Her husband, however, remained in the Parish Church to the last. George Macdonald's father, who was a very handsome man, was full of deep religious feeling, and attached himself to the Congregationalists in Huntly. He engaged in various manufactures—flax linen, potato starch, meal—according to the exigencies of the times. He lived till 1858, and died when he was sixty-six. There are many stories told of his

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coolness, his courage, and his kindness. George Macdonald's mother was Helen Mackay, from Banff. She was married in 1822, and died some ten years after, leaving five sons, of whom George was the second. Her husband married in 1839 Miss MacColl, the daughter of an Episcopalian clergyman, who has lived to be a centenarian. She proved an ideal stepmother, a mighty blessing to all the children as well as to her husband. George Macdonald was very happy at home, and warmly attached both to his father and to his mother. His poem "A Hidden Life," is tenderly dedicated to his father in some lines which declare that it was his father's life that taught him that "fatherhood is at the great world's core." But perhaps the strongest influence of George Macdonald's early years was his grandmother.

In Huntly and the neighbourhood, there was for many years a general indifference to religion. So great was the apathy that the region was known as the "Dead Sea." It was Mr. Cowie, who must by no means be confounded with Mr. Cowie in Macdonald's novel, who broke the trance. His ministry was an apostolate. He established Sunday schools; all round congregations and ministers sprang up, spiritual life strengthened, and the power of religion steadily waxed. George Macdonald's minister was the Rev. John Hill, of whom all that need be said is that he was a worthy successor to Mr. Cowie. George Macdonald's brother—a man even more gifted than himself—John Hill Macdonald, was named after the

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preacher. George Macdonald's childhood and youth were spent at The Farm, near Huntly. In childhood he was very delicate, but as he passed into his 'teens he grew stronger. He never took much interest in the sports and games of childhood, but was always a diligent reader. The religious atmosphere in his father's house was all-pervading. There was worship morning and evening. In the chapel there were three services every Sunday in summer, and two in the winter. There were also prayer meetings during the week. A strict censorship was exercised over books, but the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe* were permitted. When George was eleven he was found by his father reading one of the Waverley novels, and severely reprimanded. The book was taken from him, but later his father acknowledged the mistake. By and by he went to study at King's College, Aberdeen, where he gained a bursary of £15 a year. He had no experience of the hardness which was familiar to so many of his contemporaries. His physical wants were fully provided for, and his college years were happy. He does not seem to have distinguished himself, though I have heard that he obtained a prize for chemistry. Among his companions at college was the late Sir W. D. Geddes, who came to be Principal of the University. It was remembered by his contemporaries that the boy, who was a very good-looking lad, was particularly careful about his dress, and inclined to be vain of his appearance. He was very amiable, however, and a general favourite.

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II

In 1845 he went to London as tutor in a gentleman's family, and there is much reason to believe that this was a formative period in his life. He went to Highbury College and studied for the Congregational ministry, managing somehow to get a fairly good knowledge of German among other things in the course of his curriculum. In 1850 he settled as pastor of the little Congregational chapel in Arundel. He was in very delicate health, and puzzled a simple-minded congregation with his mystical sermons. It is easy to understand this. The young preacher forgot

“That stars beyond a certain height
Give mortals neither heat nor light.”

But he was much appreciated in his Bible class, for which he used to write poems. Some of these I have read. They show that he had already made good advance in his semi-mystical studies, and was familiar with Novalis and Jean Paul. While at Arundel in 1851, he made his happy marriage to Miss Powell, the daughter of Mr. Powell, of The Limes, Upper Clapton. Miss Powell was slightly older than he, and pre-deceased him by a few years. There were born to them eleven children, and of that household there are many who have sacred memories. The connection between George Macdonald and the Arundel Congregationalists terminated naturally and without resentment on Macdonald's part.

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III

There followed a somewhat obscure period. When Macdonald left Arundel, he preached for a time in Manchester, where he became intimate with A. J. Scott, whom to the last day of his conscious life he maintained to be the greatest man he ever knew. Scott lives upon the testimony of those who knew him, though there are broken lights in his volume of discourses. How Macdonald's preaching sped at Manchester I do not very well know. There are those living who can testify their obligation to the preacher. He was for a time minister of a church in Bolton composed mostly of working men. They were devoted to him, and only his ill-health drove him from them. In a letter dated Manchester, January 2, 1856, he said: "It will be some time before I am able to work again. We are going to Devonshire, or somewhere in the south, for a while. . . . My congregation at Bolton is willing to wait any time for me, in the hope that I shall be able to resume my work amongst them." In the same letter he speaks of "the generosity of my congregation at Bolton." Ultimately he drifted inevitably to London and to literature. A preacher he remained all his life, but he was not called to the regular ministry. He became what he called a lay member of the Church of England, but of course his sermons were preached from Nonconformist pulpits, which were most hospitably thrown open to him. Never was

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there a man who more delighted in preaching. To quote his own words: "Thoughts began to burn in me and words to come unbidden, till sometimes I had almost to restrain myself from rising in the pew where I was seated, ascending the pulpit stairs, and requesting the man who had nothing to say to walk down and allow me who had something to say to take his place." As early as 1853 he wrote about Brown-ing's *Christmas Eve*. He reviewed some of Lynch's early writings. There were at that time a few Non-conformist periodicals of Liberal tendencies, the *Nonconformist*, the *Eclectic Review*, and later on the *Christian Spectator*. But he had not yet found himself in prose. He was still a poet, and the first announcement to the world of his real genius was in his dramatic book, *Within and Without*, which appeared in 1856, and was followed by *Poems* in 1857. These books were full of unquestionable genius and profound religious feeling. The author was recognised by discerning minds as a poet. His form was imperfect, and conscious of this he was always trying to alter it. But he had more—much more—than the poetic temperament, and although obviously strongly influenced by his favourite writers, especially perhaps by Spencer, George Herbert, and Wordsworth, his own strong personality, the secret of the individual nature, was behind all. These books brought him many friendships which proved of priceless value in after years. Among them was Lady Byron—one of the most enigmatic personalities

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of the nineteenth century. Lady Byron was in a sense the mainspring of the liberal theological movement of the fifties. It was she who found funds for the *National Review*, so brilliantly conducted by R. H. Hutton. She was the most intimate friend of F. W. Robertson. Strange to say, we know very little of her. The biography which her friend A. J. Ross of Brighton wrote was cancelled, and it has been hinted not obscurely that she was capricious and difficult. But to George Macdonald she was the most steadfast of friends, and he dedicated to her memory his first novel, "with a love stronger than death." Another friend the books brought him was Mrs. Russell Gurney, whose letters were published some years ago. This friendship also lasted. I do not know whether it was at this time that Macdonald came to know the Cowper Temples, but he became soon after closely associated with them and their circle, and was a familiar and favourite speaker at the Broadlands Conference.

Lady Byron's kindness seems to have absolved him from the drudgery of teaching. He had given lessons at ladies' schools, and among these favoured institutions was the school of Mrs. Ellis, at Hoddesdon. It was about this time that he came under the direct influence of Maurice, but as we shall see there were great differences between the two, and Macdonald had a Scottish independence of mind which prevented him calling many his masters.

The poems, however, made no impression on the

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popular mind, and very few were sold. A step in advance was taken when in 1858 he published *Phantastes: a Faerie Romance*, the first of many similar books, the most notable of which was perhaps *The Portent*, published in 1864. Macdonald's Celtic blood came out in these volumes. The last gleams of Highland superstition and mysticism linger in these stories—"stories of witchcraft and second sight, and the wheeling and marshalling of ghostly armies on the moors when their tarns glimmered white in the moonlight." Macdonald dealt very skilfully with the supernatural, more skilfully, I venture to think, even than Mrs. Oliphant. But *Phantastes* was not the best of his books, though it is full of beautiful passages. He was not a mystic of the first order, but certainly he was a mystic in the sense that he believed and apprehended the symbolism of nature, and also to some extent the symbolism of Scripture.

IV.

The emergence into fame took place in 1862, with the publication of *David Elginbrod*. Mrs. Oliphant wrote to Mr. John Blackwood in 1863: "It was at my urgent recommendation (having read the MS. and made such humble suggestions towards its improvement as my knowledge of the literary susceptibility made possible) that Mr. Blackett published it, and the author is not only a man of genius, but a man burdened with ever so many children, and what

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is perhaps worse, a troublesome conscientiousness." Mrs. Oliphant earnestly pleaded with the editor of *Blackwood* that he should insert an article on *David Elginbrod*, but apparently she failed. She managed, however, to get in part of a sentence—"a rare and chance work of genius, which is only in form a novel—such as the wonderful book, full of all manner of poetic instinct and tender wisdom, called *David Elginbrod*, which neither our space nor purpose at present permits us to enter on." The book made way, and it is on three novels dealing with his native region, *David Elginbrod*, *Alec Forbes*, and *Robert Falconer*, that George Macdonald's fame will depend. In these he delivers all his message, and is in every way at his highest.

The novels were sermons by a preacher who was almost consumed with the intensity of his message. They were polemical, a protest against Calvinism, and especially against the dogma of eternal punishment. They were fiercely positive in their preaching that God is love, that God is Father. They denounced the formulation of dogma. They were full of faith in the ultimate and complete victory of the light. The story was subordinate, and yet it was true and absorbing. The impression these books made on many young minds could never be exaggerated. How wonderful it was to see the young genius come forth to the fight against the time-honoured dogmas with his dazzling spear of youthful scorn and beautiful indignation! The diamond point of

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his virgin weapons, the figure of the preacher all glowing and poetic in a region of ultra prose—these were enough to fascinate youth, and the heart was cold that did not fall in love with his generous and tender dreams. I say the books were constructive. They were altogether noble in their tone and feeling. No one could lay them down without thrilling to the thought that truth and goodness and God are alone worth living for. Even though it might be impossible to accept their full teaching, they throbbed with a spiritual life which could not but communicate itself. They are books of the true prophetic quality, and ought not to be forgotten.

Many of the characters were drawn from Huntly people. Thus Thomas Crann, the stonemason, was James Maitland, the strenuous supporter of Mr. Cowie in his struggle against the intolerance of the Secession. Murdoch Malison was also a real character. His real name was Colin Stewart. He belonged to Ross-shire, and was a licentiate of the Church of Scotland. His schoolroom was an old handloom weaver's shed, situated where the Huntly Free Church now stands. He had a firm faith in the teaching power of the tawse, and the value of its use was much believed in by the parents of the children. I have been told on high authority that he imprisoned on a fine Saturday, nineteen boys for failing in the Shorter Catechism. He forgot to let them out, but they escaped by the window. On Monday, he flogged them all till the strap was cov-

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ered with blood—so covered that he had to send it out to be washed. The boy whom he sent on this errand was James Spence, afterwards the Rev. Dr. Spence of the Poultry Chapel, London. Stewart ultimately settled in New South Wales, and oddly enough he married in Australia an old aunt of the author of *Alec Forbes*. But in the best of all Macdonald's books, *Robert Falconer*, we have the largest autobiographical element. That fine character, Mrs. Falconer, in whom we see the grander type of character which Calvinism has produced in Scotland, a character in which a flame of true religion burned under a thick and hard crust, was his own grandmother, upright, just, severe, and yet at heart loving, with nothing mean about her. The boy's soul and hers came into contact, and he saw her when he wrote *Robert Falconer* in the tender light of holy memories. The story of Shargar is based on fact. The grandmother took charge of the family of a woman who was begging, hoping to save them from utter ruin. Two of them went abroad, the third remained at home and made a fortune, living till 1898. Mrs. Falconer believed that all merriment came from the devil himself. The fiddle, about which so much is said in this novel, was in reality her own husband's, and after his death in 1819 was actually burned by her that she might save her own sons from performing on it. Her antagonism to Roman Catholicism was extreme, although it did not extend to individuals. One of her grandsons used to tell of a

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visit which he paid to her shortly before her death. She was sitting up in bed reading the large type of a newspaper article, although ninety-two years of age. It was in the year 1848, the year when many European thrones were shaken. She was deeply interested about the Pope. Addressing her grandson, she said, "Laddie, the papers say that amo' a' the changes takin' place i' the warld, they have gotten a gweed Pope at Rome, and I have been prayin' to the Lord a' nicht that he wud gie him a new heart and a gweed wife." Eric Ericson is suggested at least by the writer's brother, John Hill Macdonald, who died in 1858. The poems which are strikingly beautiful, are entirely his. He went to Russia, as tutor in the family of the Chaplain to the British Embassy in Moscow, just before the Crimean war, remaining there till near its close, when, after a short stay in Germany, he returned home. The cold of the Russian climate, however, left its marks upon him, and consumption carried him off. George Macdonald always delighted to say that his brother was a greater and more original genius than himself.

V

The remaining events in George Macdonald's life are comparatively well known. He had a period of great prosperity when he was working with Mr. Strahan, the publisher. In *Good Words*, *Good Words for the Young*, the *Argosy*, and the *Sunday Magazine*, much of his work appeared, and was

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highly paid for. He worked very diligently, publishing novels, dramas, poems, and stories for children. Macdonald lived in his most prosperous time at The Retreat, Hammersmith, where he exercised a generous hospitality. Ultimately he found it necessary to live abroad during the winter. At first he stayed at Nervi, near Genoa, but he soon acquired his home at Bordighera. This came to be the centre of the place for all visitors, and no one who was ever there will forget his experience. Macdonald was the most generous of givers—time, money, thought, and care were lavishly spent. He preached and lectured constantly to the visitors, and all were welcome. In the summer months, he came to this country and preached and lectured so long as he had strength. Few authors were more familiar personally to the public, and his grand prophetic figure, his great hope in God, his burning zeal, and his beautiful diction made him one of the most charming and acceptable of preachers.

This is not the place in which to discuss his message. In a sense it is true that he preached the love of God to a generation that needed the word, but as time went on and thoughts changed, he found his true sphere as the great prophet of immortality. Dogmatic universalism has necessarily failed to commend itself to the modern mind. Men hesitate to say how long and how far the choice of evil will persist. They may hope, but that is all. Whether the Tree is to be penetrated with life to its remotest

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branch when it is thrown out into its final blossoming of holiness and joy, they cannot tell. There is that in life and there is that in revelation which forbids assurance. But the prophet of immortality in a world of death has a high function. It is confusing and misleading to associate Macdonald with Maurice and with Robertson. They had many points of contact, but there were deep differences. Neither Maurice nor Robertson could be called the prophet of immortality. The truest thing perhaps ever said about Maurice was that he touched the concrete as a bird dips its wing into the water. Macdonald on the contrary was intensely interested in life. Miss Wedgwood, one of Maurice's most intimate friends, has said that she cannot recall another religious teacher who so consistently refused to contemplate the world beyond the grave. So much was this the case, that we learn from his Memoir that it was even possible for honest readers to doubt of his belief in a future life. As for Robertson, he scarcely believed in the recognition of friends in eternity. Macdonald, on the contrary, was vehemently persuaded of the sanctity and permanence of love, and to him a heaven was a home heaven. Only those who have read his books through can understand the strong invigorating note of faith which runs through them. And all of them are in unison with the first chords he struck.

Now that he has gone, I recall some words of his written in a letter of 1877: "Sometimes one is

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tempted to say, 'Would it were all over, and we were altogether in the great thought-room beyond. How one is tethered by the heavy chain of gravitation! But I do not say it. Let me be just as He wills, for His will is my will. Until we are ripe, it is not good we should drop; then we shall hang no longer.'"

THE END

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The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes recording all sales, purchases, and expenses in a timely and accurate manner.

The second part of the document provides a detailed breakdown of the company's revenue. It shows the total revenue for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is performing well and areas where it needs to improve.

The third part of the document discusses the company's expenses. It shows the total expenses for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is overspending and areas where it can save money.

The fourth part of the document discusses the company's profit. It shows the total profit for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is generating a profit and areas where it is not.

The fifth part of the document discusses the company's cash flow. It shows the total cash flow for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is generating cash and areas where it is using cash.

The sixth part of the document discusses the company's assets and liabilities. It shows the total assets and liabilities for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is increasing its assets and areas where it is increasing its liabilities.

The seventh part of the document discusses the company's equity. It shows the total equity for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is increasing its equity and areas where it is not.

The eighth part of the document discusses the company's overall financial performance. It shows the total financial performance for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is performing well and areas where it needs to improve.

The ninth part of the document discusses the company's future prospects. It shows the total future prospects for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is expected to grow and areas where it is not.

The tenth part of the document discusses the company's risks. It shows the total risks for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is exposed to risk and areas where it is not.

The eleventh part of the document discusses the company's opportunities. It shows the total opportunities for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is expected to grow and areas where it is not.

The twelfth part of the document discusses the company's conclusions. It shows the total conclusions for each quarter and year, along with a comparison to the budget. This analysis helps identify areas where the company is performing well and areas where it needs to improve.



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